

Homily
August 1, 2021
18th Sunday in OT

Who's hungry? For many the tradition of going out to eat after Mass goes back to our childhood. Food and the family meal are a staple of our lives. We eat to survive; we can only go without food for a few days, a few weeks at the most, before our bodies begin to suffer. We gather for a meal as a group because eating together brings us closer to one another. We eat for pleasure. Who doesn't like a good steak? What's your comfort food?

We suffer emotionally when we are hungry. You've heard the term 'hangry.' Some people suffer low blood sugar when they don't eat regularly. Others may develop eating disorders because of what they eat or how much they eat.

What we eat is also important. It was German philosopher Ludwig Feuerback who said, "Der Mensch ist, was er ißt," "We are what we eat," in reference to the state of one's mind, especially regarding the stress we experience in our lives.

The Israelites were stressed as they grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the first reading because they were hungry. They would have preferred to die with a full belly in disobedience to God than be led to their deaths by hunger. How often do we react emotionally due to hunger? Don't we make better decisions when we are not struggling with an empty stomach?

Ultimately, God provided the Israelites with the food they needed; bread in the morning and meat in the evening. All this to let the Israelites know the Lord is their God. Do we recognize that God provides for everything we need? Do we grumble when we don't have everything we want?

We make time for all the needs we have in our everyday lives. We eat when we need to eat. We get dressed and go to our scheduled appointments when required. We play when time allows. We make sure all our temporal needs are met.

What about our spiritual needs? What do we do to make sure our relationship with our Lord and Savior is good?

Look what He does for us to make sure His relationship with us is good! He created us; we wouldn't even exist if He didn't say the word. He provides for all our temporal needs; He feeds us with the nourishment our bodies need; He clothes us and keeps us warm when it's cold and cool when it's hot; He gave us certain and specific gifts to help us be productive, to give our lives meaning; He gave us each other to share all these gifts to make our lives more complete and better together.

And He provides us a means to be with Him forever.

When He created all this, the world and all that's in it, especially us, He had a plan for us to be one with Him. Then we blew it. We made a mess of things. This is our bed and we have to sleep in it.

But, we weren't made to stay here forever; He has a plan for us. When we drove off course, He made a correction. He sent His only Son to be life eternal for us. We only have to say, "Yes," to Him.

And it looks like this:

First, as Paul tells the Ephesians in the second reading, we must put our old life away, our life of selfishness and denial of our true self. We must put on our new selves, be renewed in the spirit of our minds. In other words, we must choose to get out of the bed we made for ourselves, put on a new set of clothes, bright and shiny with a new outlook on life, in the image God created for us. Not of darkness and hidden places, but in the light of His shining face. Yes, it hurts our eyes, but the more we embrace God's plan, the easier it gets. We must break free of the old habits and begin new habits in alignment with God's vision for us.

Then we follow Jesus. And why not; Jesus is the Bread of Life. He says so in today's Gospel.

But what does that mean?

Simply put, just as we eat our family meal by consuming those food items we need for the nourishment of our physical bodies, Jesus is the food we need for our spiritual growth and eternal life. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the ultimate, final and perfect sacrifice, the only and necessary food we need to be with God forever.

When we eat this bread of life, we will never hunger. When we believe in Jesus, we will never thirst.

The food we eat is broken down and absorbed into our bodies to be used to build our muscles and bones and for fuel to power our physical bodies.

The Bread of Life enters into our bodies and souls, healing us, nurturing us, strengthening us, making us one with Him, and one with each other. We are what we eat. Truly and really, we become Jesus Who wants so badly to be one with us. And we become one body, the body of Christ, all of us together when our stomachs are full with this Bread of Life. Imagine how close we are as family when we eat that Sunday meal together after Mass. Imagine how much more we are one when we all consume this Bread of Life. Our belly is satisfied when we eat the Bread come down from heaven.

We can't do this on our own. We must eat this Bread of Life if we want to be with God for eternity. We must believe in Him Who has done everything for us, including giving us Himself in the most intimate of ways. And we must do this together. We are all on the same journey. It may look different from each of our individual points of view, but when we join together and join with Jesus, it all comes together.

When we come forward to receive the Bread of Life, we remember that we are one family, all of us together. And when we leave here, we go out into this world strengthened for the journey, we go forth to bring others into our family. And eventually we can come to that heavenly banquet where we will share the ultimate meal, the bread of the angels, together with all of the family of God, the Body of Christ.

Come! Let us eat!