

**Reflection for 28-29 May 2016**  
**Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Year C**  
***Mike Britton***

*Text: Genesis 14:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17.*

As an occasional reflector, there are a quite a few sets of Sunday readings I've never preached on. This set, however, keeps coming up for me; apparently I'm going to keep working on this until I get it right.

In meditating on this Gospel this time, another passage about bread came to my mind: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'"<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that in today's Gospel reading, the Apostles are unwittingly following the devil's path, concerning themselves with food in preference to Jesus' teaching. Jesus instead sees a chance to teach not just through words, but through the kind of concrete example he so loves. He will see to his followers' well-being, but neither by telling them to fend for themselves nor by providing everything on a silver platter, either with a showy conjurer's trick, converting stones to loaves, or even with manna which they need only collect from the ground, as in the Exodus. Instead, he calls on us, his disciples, to participate and to feed the people—his people.

What do we do when we are called to feed all those people? Faced with the hunger of so many, the five loaves and two fish we have to offer seem a pitiable joke. So often, that's the way things look: the need seems to overwhelm our capability, and it's easy to despair.

But if we put our faith in God and give what we have, we open a door through which the miraculous can enter. Perhaps the loaves and fish were physically multiplied, or perhaps others in the crowd were moved to share what they had brought—because just as the Twelve happened to have some food with them, others likely did as well; perhaps a bit of both. There would certainly have been an incentive for followers to share what they had, because for the food to run short would be a loss of honour for Jesus, and by extension, those who had followed him. This was a deserted place, far from his usual establishment critics; this crowd was "invested" in Jesus.

Following Melchizedek's and Jesus' form, we will thank and bless God for the bread and wine of today's Eucharist. There is a phrase in the Preparation that I'd like to highlight. Fr. Richard will say, "through your goodness we have received the bread [and wine] we offer you; fruit of the earth [and vine] and work of human hands, [they] will become for us the bread of life [and our spiritual drink]."<sup>2</sup> God's goodness inspires and completes the gifts of earth and vine, but also our work. Jesus' mission was to elevate our relationship with God; if we are sisters and brothers with Jesus, we are also co-workers with him. Jesus demonstrates what we today call servant leadership, involving and depending on his people and unifying our efforts to provide for our needs. We are called to participate as followers, and at need, to emulate his way of leadership, leaving behind the self-reliant and self-centered model of the entitled leader which tempts our egos. (The devil tempted Jesus with this too, that day in the wilderness, offering him all the kingdoms of the world, but he remained true to his mission.<sup>3</sup>)

For Jesus to give all of his body and blood, we cannot stand as idle spectators and passive receivers. What we hold back of ourselves, God will not take from us, but also cannot make one with Christ. When we give up our five loaves and two fish, we will have nothing left for ourselves: no backup plan, no safety net, but only what God gives us. But just as seeds become wheat and vines, what we give over to God is multiplied.

This promise of God's generosity, God's abundance, is hard for us to believe, because we live in a world of economics, of scarcity, of risk management and saving for a rainy day. Trust is the antidote to this fear; trust in God, but also trust in ourselves and each other. In community, we can perhaps come to trust more easily, and so we gather, and dare to believe that as Teresa of Ávila says, only God is enough.<sup>4</sup>

When I eat this bread and drink this wine, I pledge myself to be Body and Blood, not just to God, but to the community and the world—to you, asserting that I will be part of God's work to sustain us all. I pray for the courage to trust ever more fully in Jesus' promise, so that I can give myself ever more completely over to be transformed by and into God's abundant and all-embracing love.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 4:1-4

<sup>2</sup> Preparation of the Gifts, Liturgy of the Eucharist

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:5-8

<sup>4</sup> "Nada te turbe", St. Teresa of Ávila