

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year A August 3, 2014

Theme: Pigs of themselves

Have you ever noticed when there is free food, more than a few people **make pigs of themselves?**

At **wedding reception buffets, church picnics and at all-you-can-eat restaurants** people go at the food as if it is their last meal.

Recently at such an event, I saw a rather **smallish, older woman** come back from the food line with her dinner plate heaping with several pieces of fried chicken, a couple pieces of ham, at least three meatballs, pasta, veggies and potatoes.

Balanced atop it all were three slices of Italian bread.

In her left hand she deftly held two smaller plates: one heaped with an anti-pasta salad and the other with three – count them, three – desserts.

Instead of dinner, I think the dear lady was **stocking up for the week.**

Free food and free drink – milk and wine – without paying and without cost: the **prophetic book of Isaiah** envisions these as a signs of consolation and comfort to God's hard pressed and bedraggled people.

No more spending hard-earned money on what fails to satisfy.

No more wasting wages on food and drink that do not nourish.

**“Heed me and you will eat well,
You shall delight in rich fare....
Listen that you may have life.”**

With this prophetic text in the background we hear Jesus say to his disciples:
“There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.”

On the surface level, this instruction is **obviously impossible**: five thousand men, not counting women and children, five loaves and two fish won't do the job.

When the disciples objected, **they had not gone deeper** and realized who it was who had asked them to feed all the people: **“Bring the five loaves and two fish here to me.”**

“He took them; he blessed them, broke and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the crowds.”

Now there was free food for five thousand men, not counting the woman and children.

“They all ate and were satisfied and the picked up the fragments leftover -- twelve wicker baskets full.”

Free food for all those people and twelve baskets of leftovers.

We know the story well; it is reported no less than **six times** in the four Gospels, so beloved and important was it to the early church.

But **what do we do** with this story?

Most folks likely marvel at it, noting what **an amazing thing** it was Jesus did and wondering how he was able to multiply the fish and bread to feed so many.

Such an approach to biblical stories, however, **doesn't yield much** for our spiritual lives, it seems to me.

We simply say, wow and "yea" Jesus and go on with life unmoved.

What if, instead, we **see ourselves in the story**, as participants.

What if we are the disciples to whom Jesus, looking at the hungry of our world and community and lives says: **"There's no need for them to go away. You yourselves give them something to eat."**

What if we are the ones who look at the overwhelming problems of our world, our community and maybe even our own lives and then bring to Jesus **a couple of measly fish and a few loaves of bread** - what we have, our available time and talent, our energy and our enthusiasm, such as it is.

And Jesus in his own holy and miraculous way makes it enough to feed thousands.

The early church perhaps fell so in love with this story because in it they **heard their own story**, the story of their own discipleship and service.

They recognised the scriptures were describing what they were experiencing in their lives as Christians and what they were celebrating in their Eucharist.

So brothers and sisters, even if all you have are a couple measly fish and a handful of dried out, day old loaves of bread, take heart:

Bring them to Christ and he will make them enough to feed five thousand men, not counting the women and children.