

Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time Year B

John 6:60-69

We all look at food differently.

For some of us, food is all about tasting good. Who cares about fat or sodium? That's what makes it taste good. And the bigger the serving the better. Deep fried. Yum.

How about those stores where you can 2 packages in one? No problem. I will work it off. Right after the game is over.

Ok, maybe I will start tomorrow. I know that drill. I have more than once had a few too many dips with the chips and way too many resolutions to exercise more.

Others take a very different approach to food. We are careful to read the ingredient labels. We seek food that claims to be the healthy choice. We take care to make sure that we put only what is good for our bodies and those of our children.

Food can also be our best friend. Our favorite food can comfort us. It can offer us escape when we are tense and anxious. Our favorite food can be a companion when we are lonely.

Food can also be the enemy when you can't fit into the new dress or suit.

Or when you are fighting your weight to make the team.

And, the war on food can have tragic results for those striving to have the perfect body shape.

Food can also be a manifestation of love.

The grandmother happily baking the grandchildren's favorite cookies.

The young man spending a whole day preparing a meal for the love of his life.

Everyone in the family getting together for a family meal. Not only eating but helping with the preparation.

In the end, good food in the right portions nourishes and sustains our bodies.

Now for five Sundays in a row we have heard a lot about another kind of food.

Chapter 6 of John's Gospel is a long discourse in which Jesus calls Himself the "Bread of Life."

And in rather graphic terms, He invites His listeners to "eat" and "drink" His flesh and blood.

Actually for the first Christians, these words evoked the Eucharistic supper as they gathered on the first day of the week. Just as we are doing here today.

Jesus words invite us to feast on His real presence of the Eucharist to be the real food and the real drink that will nourish and sustain us.

Sustain us in His Spirit,

sustain us in our relation with the Father,

and nourish us with His graces and strength to lead complete and purposeful lives.

Like food for our bodies, Jesus' food can awaken our senses to discovering His presence in our lives.

Just as food can become our friend, Jesus invites us to a meal where all are best friends of His.

Just as food can be a comfort in tough times, His food can give real and lasting consolation and peace.

Just as food for our bodies can be a sign of love, His food is Himself who is Love.

Not like food for our bodies that become part of us. When we eat His Body and Drink His Blood, we become part of Him.

It is in this Sacrament of the Eucharist, the very Source and Summit of our faith, the moment when heaven comes down to earth that we take on the very life of Jesus.

It becomes possible to live a life for one another.

A life when self defers to community.

A life of mercy and forgiveness, not retribution.

A life where differences are not the issue but where the common good is the priority.

And yes, even a world of peace not war is a possibility.

A life that becomes possible when we do more than just opening our hands to receive and our mouths to consume.

It becomes possible when we open our hearts and spirits as well so that we can become what we receive.

It is in this sharing of the Eucharistic table that God has become the provider and the provision.

Both the preparer of the feast and the feast itself. Both the giver and the gift.

No empty calories. More than good taste. More than just nourish and sustenance. No possibility to overeat.

The love of God that is Jesus, the Bread of Life is **real food** for our hungry souls and spirits.

Real drink that is the very life of God flowing through us.

Now after all that I have said, Jesus words at the very end of this discourse asks His disciples and us a question. A question that is, in reality a challenge.

After some disciples heard all of this, they returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied Him. He then asks the Twelve "Do you also want to leave?"

That is the challenge for us also. After being strengthened, nourished, and sustained by this Eucharistic banquet.

Do we want to return to our former ways?

Does the Eucharist, each and every time we receive it change us in some way?

Does it, over time transform us?

Do we somehow become more Christ like?

So, as I said in the beginning, “We all look at food in different ways.”

But one way we should all look at food is that there is the stark reality of hunger in our world.

We are privileged to eat, to drink, to learn God’s loving words. And because of this privilege, we should be sensitized to the needs of others.

We are called to leave this holy table enlightened by this great mystery,

graced by the experience and

willing to alleviate hungers, no matter what those hungers might be, of those whom God will place in our path.

At the meals Jesus hosts, there are no guest lists or place cards.

None are necessary, because all are invited. We here today are the invitees but also the inviters.

In our sharing of the bread of life, we pray to follow His lead in welcoming all others to His Eucharistic table and our own.