

“Bread for the Journey of Life”

Introduction

Life is not always a walk on the sunny side of the road. There are the dark moments, and the rough patches. There is often uncertainty of what will come... We – over and over again - need strength and courage to face the road lying ahead, and all the happy and sad surprises which life holds in store for us.

We need bread. Bread for the journey of life...

Bread to still our physical hunger, but also bread to feed our hungry souls and minds.

And what we do in this situation is, we look at our Bible and at the people who make and eat bread there... the people who share and break the bread there.

We look at the Old and New Testament. And we meet Elijah and the widow, Jesus feeding the 5000, Martha and Mary, Zacchaeus, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Before reading reader puts a loaf of bread on the altar

Reading 1

1 Kings 17:13+14

Elijah said to her, ‘Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail.

Meditation

This is the bread which the widow of Zarepath shared with Elijah.

The widow and her son suffered from hunger. They were part of the poor population who often had not enough for daily life.

Elijah arrived at the gate of the town and met this woman collecting firewood. He spoke to her and asked her for something to drink. And while she walked away to fetch some water, he shouted after her and asked for a bite of bread too.

“I have nothing baked,” said the woman, “only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug. I am now gathering a couple of sticks for a fire, so that I may go home, make a little food for me and my son before we die.”

That’s how poor they were. Death was already knocking at the door.

There was no future for the mother and her child. And maybe not for many in their town.

The widow had nothing to share, and still Elijah spoke to her: “Do not be afraid; go and do as you said. Give me a bit, feed yourself, feed your boy... and I promise you: you will forever have enough flour and enough oil...”

The woman trusted Elijah.

This lead her from death to life, and it saved her whole community.

They all could from then on share the little they had and they never ran out of it.

The first loaf of bread today is for the sharing of the poorest of the poor.

Before reading reader puts a loaf of bread on the altar

Reading 2

Luke 9:13+13

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, 'Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.' But he said to them, 'You give them something to eat.'

Meditation

This is one of the loaves of bread the 5000 shared.

"You give them to eat", Jesus said to his disciples when the listening crowd at the end of a hot and long day were tired and hungry. Five loaves of bread they had, and two fish.

The miracle of the bread puts Jesus in a line with Elijah. Both of them make sure that there is enough to eat for those who are with them.

The hungry crowd around Jesus were satisfied by what the disciples shared because they did simply as Jesus had told them.

What we have here is not so much a miracle of multiplying food, but a miracle of sharing and of trusting.

And the lesson we learn is: when we share there is always enough for everyone. It may not always look like it, but once we start giving from what we have, our lives can be turned into feasts...

Before reading reader puts a loaf of bread on the altar

Reading 3

Luke 10:38-40

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'

Meditation

This is the bread Martha baked and Mary shared.

Jesus and his friends were on their way to Jerusalem, when Martha received him into her home. It was the household of two sisters who were not just good friends but serious followers of Jesus. The sisters shared their home with their brother Lazarus, also a friend of Jesus'.

Martha was, as we are told, doing all the household work, and Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet. Mary never spoke. But Martha burst in and claimed that Mary should help her. Conflict came up.

Competition between two women and two different ways of life...

Martha and Mary were sisters – as different as night from day.
And the miracle of living together peacefully in community lies in sharing:
sharing our talents, our gifts, and our skills.

Let us imagine Martha and Mary being best friends - with all their differences:
Martha bakes the bread and Mary shares it out... And let us never forget that Martha
and Mary together are parts of each human being's personality – an active part and a
quiet part.

We need to find the right portion of both in order to be happy and healthy.

Before reading reader puts a loaf of bread on the altar

Reading 4

Luke 19:5+6

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

Meditation

This is the bread which Zacchaeus bought in the village shop after Jesus had invited himself to Zacchaeus' house for dinner.

Do you remember him?

He lived in Jericho. He was the chief tax collector, and he cheated his own people when he collected taxes for the Romans. Zacchaeus was rich. And he was short, and in order to see Jesus who entered the town that day, he climbed on this funny tree. Zacchaeus was not well liked. He was looked down on and excluded. And that was his own fault.

But to everybody's surprise Jesus turned his attention to the disliked little man and asked him to have dinner with him. He entered Zacchaeus' house and shared the table with a sinner.

Jesus' act turned the world of Zacchaeus upside down. He became a happy and welcoming person. He let people into his house from then on - he fed them and served them. He celebrated parties with the door wide open so that all who wanted to be part of it could come and join in.

Zacchaeus' house from then on was filled with love, happiness and laughter.

There was always an extra portion of food for the stranger and a warm welcome to everyone God sent to them. Jesus enters our lives as he entered Zacchaeus'. And he doesn't come alone he brings with him the blind, the lame, and the lepers of our day. And he asks us to welcome them.

Before reading reader puts a loaf of bread on the altar

Reading 5

Luke 24:30+31

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

Meditation

This is the bread of the resurrection which the two disciples shared with Jesus on that evening in the village of Emmaus.

The two friends had been running away from the place of their greatest defeat. Jesus, in whom they had put their greatest hopes, had been killed. They had buried him, and then there was this talking about his resurrection...

The two friends had come to the point where they needed some distance. They had to get away from the pain and the horror of it all. They needed to escape the confusion. On their way they talked, considered, argued, cried... when suddenly a stranger joined them and walked and talked with them.

He called on them to be strong. And he explained to them the whole history of God's loving relationship with his people. He opened to them a new way of looking at things.

And the two friends began to understand: the dream they'd thought lost and gone, could not be destroyed! What they had begun with Jesus, they could continue... There was a future lying ahead of them despite all the pain and fear. The way would become clearer the longer they would walk it...

Prayer

God, you are the bread from heaven,
giving life to the world.
You fill our emptiness with your goodness.
You see our exhaustion and offer us your strength.
Come, refresh, renew and restore us.

We come to you with our hunger for justice,
and you offer us stuff for our dreams of a better world:
you nourish in us the images of bread
shared out for many,
of fish and meat filling people's pots...

You encourage us to believe that there will always be enough for all
as long as people share generously what they have.
You open our eyes to discover ways
on which to survive in the wilderness and in the confusion of daily life.
You help us to see those who go through desert times
and find it hard to cope.
Let us offer them the sustenance of faith,
and let us reach out to them with practical care.

You let us see the people in this world who starve,
the people who suffer from violence and war.
We pray for them and many others, hoping for peace and love.

You let us see those who are sick.
We pray for them and many others
hoping for restoration and healing.

You let us see those whose lives are fragmented, broken and burdened.
And we pray that there may be many on their journey with them
who show compassion, comfort and care.
May all in need, God, feel your presence and your grace.

God, fill us today and fill the whole world with your peace,
and help us to be sharers of bread and makers of peace. Amen.