

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2018  
The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 14, 31-33

Psalm 130

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

One of the great anthems of the generation as I grew up was 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction' by the Rolling Stones... with its repetitive lament... "But I try, and I try,... but I can't get no. satisfaction.". It's a song summing up the restless hunger of the western world. And Mick Jagger and the boys, certainly lived-out the hunger off stage as well as on. They did indeed try... just about everything going in fact. And you look at their ravaged 70 odd year old faces today and it's etched all over them - they still haven't found it. and it's not for want of trying!

But they're an easy and safely distant target. Let's come closer to home. for the gospel today is speaking not necessarily to them, but to you and me. I look at us today and I see hungry people! And that's because we're normal. We're certainly part of a dissatisfied culture and society, but more importantly, we're part of the human race. And that's how we humans are... hungry... aching inside for something we don't even know what it is!

The Christian faith teaches that hunger is unfulfilled desire... Human beings are created to be one with God... in intimate relationship. This is planted deep within our DNA - its fundamental to who we are. And so, regardless of what we do, no matter how successful or blessed we are in life, we will ache with hunger until this oneness is achieved. There is only one that can truly feed us. And that is God.

Our hunger is important and we should pay attention to it... for it reveals that something essential is missing... We ache to be restored to intimacy with our Creator. Franciscan spiritual guide, Richard Rohr, teaches that in healthy human development, we live our lives in two distinct chapters.

The first chapter is necessarily given over to... the formation of personal identity... to the establishment of a community of family and friends.... and for most people, the forging of vocation, job or career.

But all of us come to a point when, generally through crisis, we recognise that none of this is enough. No matter how glittering and pleasurable, no matter how noble or good. It's not the main event - that is, it cannot feed our deep hunger. It cannot satisfy us. Rohr says this is the invitation to begin the second chapter journey - the spiritual journey... the road that focuses on growing intimacy with God.

But Rohr is disturbed that something's gone wrong in western culture - because so few of us actually get to the second chapter! The crisis comes to everyone... repetitively... in the simple realisation that what we're doing isn't working as well as we need it to - that try as we might, we still feel hungry... something's missing. But at that point, too many of us are dodging the invitation to Life!

Some avoid the invitation by toughening their resolve and trying harder... bashing away at the same failed solution regardless of it not working! Some swap one dream, one illusory recipe for happiness, for another equally impotent solution. And for us westerners, our consumerist affluence offers a myriad of addictive forms of self-medication - food, , sport, houses, holidays, entertainment, even things like alcohol or gambling... which certainly deaden the ache for a while... but can never meet the desire. The hunger always returns...

But the healthy choice... the life-giving invitation... is to start out on the road of the second chapter... Which is what today's gospel invites us to do. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry (again)... (35) Whoever eats of this bread will live..." (51) That's the promise! So, what does it mean to feed on Christ?

The best analogy I came up with is the spiritual practice of fasting... When we fast, we abstain from food and alcohol, because we recognise how we routinely use them, to mask our inner hunger. In fasting, we intentionally put them aside, so that we might actually feel our hunger, our desire, as it really is. And in this emptiness we name as a statement of faith... that only God can feed us... only God can ever fully satisfy our desire. We use the time, space and energy to paying attention to the presence of God instead... most commonly in some form of prayer or deep reflection; or sometimes in an act of compassion and service.

The choice to commit ourselves to the 'second chapter' of life... the spiritual journey... follows a similar pattern. It can only begin when we recognise the myriad ways we seek to satisfy our hunger... and how they have failed to bring the satisfaction we desire. And so, as an act of faith, we shift our expectation away from these failed solutions... to God alone. (Only God can feed us!) We intentionally shift significant time, focus and striving away from the first chapter practices... to the second chapter lifestyle. In faith, trust and hope we commit ourselves to the spiritual journey - as the central focus of our life. In the language of today's gospel... we feed on Christ! And we can do that in this way.

1. We feed on the Words of Christ... The Word of God recorded in scripture and tradition, the teaching of Jesus Christ, moves from the margin to the centre of our life - from an occasional and sporadic dabbling, to it being at the heart of each and every day. So that the Word becomes the foundation and the framework upon which every day is built.

2. We feed on the Way of Christ... recognising there is nothing we do or say that is not informed by Christ. We move from someone standing spectator-like in the crowd, hoping for a crumb of inspiration or comfort, to being a disciple... one who intentionally seeks to walk in the way of Christ... in all things.

3. We feed on the Presence of Christ... for our hunger is only finally met in relationship... in growing oneness with God. The Eucharistic connection is obvious and powerful... but this journey is beyond 'Sunday morning' and spreads throughout our life... with each and every day hovering around the practice of the God's presence in prayer... in silence and deep reflection.

For many of you, the most disturbing part of this sermon will be the idea of shifting significant energy and focus from that which you invested-in for the first chapter. This may be OK to consider as it applies to some of our life... but it's far harder when applied to something good and truly important... like family and friends for example. The fear voice comes... 'How could I possibly shift energy from them?' I understand... but wisdom requires that we do exactly this.

For no matter how good and important family and friends (for instance) may be... expecting them to feed us... to satisfy our hunger and desire, lays an impossible burden on them... and this unfair and unreasonable expectation does real damage... to them as well as us. But when we release this expectation, when we know that our desire can only be met by God, then we can surrender all that striving and need to control. And then freedom flows... for them and us... new life comes... Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry (again)... Whoever eats of this bread will live..." That's the promise!

Is it time for you to begin the second chapter... the spiritual journey? Or are you still dabbling here, secretly hoping that something else will pay off? If so, what more evidence will you need... before you accept that nothing and no-one but God, can satisfy your hunger? In the name of God. Amen