

**Homily for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - B** **July 30, 2006**

*2 Kings 4:42-44*

*Ephesians 4:1-6*

*John 6:1-15*

When I was a child, a snack was something special,  
out of the ordinary, undeserved – a treat!  
Of course, this was some years ago,  
long before “snack” was considered a major food group!  
I won’t be surprised if one day Congress declares  
that children have a constitutional right to snacks - at least twice a day!  
I remember when I was a child,  
standing in front of the refrigerator with the door open,  
looking at shelves of food, and calling out to my mother,  
“Mom, I’m hungry and there’s nothing to eat.”  
She always had two responses when I said this:  
“If you’re standing in front of the refrigerator with the door open –  
close it!”  
And then,  
“There are apples and oranges and grapes in the kitchen.”  
And I’d say,  
“But I’m not hungry for a piece of fruit.”  
And she’d say,  
“Well, then, I guess you’re not *really* hungry  
because there’s plenty there to eat.”

My mother was right on both counts:  
it’s a waste of energy to leave a refrigerator door open;  
and I wasn’t really hungry: I just wanted something sweet to eat.

I’ve learned not to keep the refrigerator door open unnecessarily,  
- but I’m still having a hard time with understanding  
when I’m really hungry or when I just want another dessert.

The scriptures today find all of us standing hungry before God,  
the questions the same as in the kitchen of my childhood:  
“What are you really hungry for?”  
“What do you have an appetite for?”  
“What do you tend to fill up on?”  
“Are you looking to nourish yourself, or just to satisfy yourself?”  
“Does what you consume make you stronger or,  
indeed, does it make you weaker?”

The Lord made no mistake in choosing food and drink,  
suppers, meals, banquets, wedding feasts, bread and wine  
as the images of his desire for intimacy and companionship with us.

He seduced the starving Israelites in the desert  
by feeding them with manna;  
in today’s gospel he feeds some 5,000 families

who had followed him up a mountain  
where there wasn't a Burger King or MacDonald's to be found;  
even now, today, he comes to us gathered around a table:  
the table of his nourishing word  
and the table of his last supper, the altar of his sacrifice.

And in word, in sacrament, he asks us:

"What are you really hungry for?"

"Are your appetites healthy, or *not* so healthy?"

"What fills you up?"

Does it satisfy you? strengthen you? weaken you?"

We feed on many things these days:

- we feed on nature's resources, even when her supplies are low;
- we feed on the internet, the media, the entertainment industry;
- mindlessly, we often feed off the backs of the poor  
who have little to feed on themselves;
- we feed on power, on toys and gadgets, on having more,  
on having more-than-others-have;
- we store up more and more on which to feed  
lest our hunger to be fed ever go unsatisfied...

Here, at the Lord's table, we feast on *less*, not *more*:

we feast on *only* a morsel-of-bread-become-his-body,  
*only* a sip-of-wine-become-his-blood.

What Jesus satisfies in us through the Eucharist

is not a hunger to be *filled up*,  
but rather a hunger to be *FUL-filled*.

Here is a hunger which is *satisfied*

not in being *sated* but in seeing  
that what *truly* satisfies is *leaving room* for what is *true*.

Here is a hunger that *strengthens* us

by nourishing in us the will to *fast* from appetites that weaken us.

This food is not something we can store or prepare on our own,

no more than the disciples could have fed  
the thousands on the mountain.

This is food that comes from the heart and hand of God

and is served to us at the table of his sacrament.

So, close the refrigerator door!

Look around and see how much the Lord has provided for us...

Come to his table; taste and see how good the Lord is...

- Rev. Austin Fleming

