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John 6:24-35  
August 5, 2018

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.

Bread, in all its various forms, is the most widely consumed food in the world. Lack of bread or rising bread price can lead to social unrest. Have you heard of bread riots? Riots, protest, and violence happened in a different part of the world because of rising bread price. Countries like Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan have experienced violent demonstrations at the beginning of 2017. Scholars believe that hunger is a form of institutionalized violence. Bread is essential for us. Even those of us who have gluten sensitivity look for gluten-free bread.

Last week we read about Jesus feeding the five thousand people. They were happy to receive free bread. The Jews were poor and in need of food. Taxation was a heavy burden on peasant Jews. They had to pay a temple tax, and because they were living under the Roman occupation of Palestine, they had to pay taxes to Rome. "The taxes were extracted at the time of the harvest and transported to the city. In times of poor harvests this meant that the farmer was left to suffer or even starve."<sup>1</sup> The burden of

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<sup>1</sup> (PDF) *Poverty in the first-century Galilee*. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309254500\\_Poverty\\_in\\_the\\_first-century\\_Galilee](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309254500_Poverty_in_the_first-century_Galilee) [accessed Jul 28 2018].

taxation pushed the peasant Jews to lose their land. “The changed situation from a landowner, a peasant farmer, into a tenant farmer or day laborer was dramatic for many Galileans. The peasant farmers were permanently poor and in continuous danger to fall under the subsistence level.”<sup>2</sup> Those who followed Jesus and ate the bread he gave them were the landless: peasant children without inheritance, expropriated smallholders and all kinds of people who were deprived of access to the land. They were happy to receive bread. Parents were delighted to see their children eating and be satisfied. So, the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king, but he withdrew from their midst. They looked for him. When they found him, Jesus told them “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” (v. 26). It hurts to hear Jesus saying such a thing. If I were hungry and someone gave me food, I would follow that person.

Jesus does not undermine the hungry peasants, but he takes the opportunity to talk to them about the heavenly bread that is his body. Jesus takes the chance to talk about Holy Communion. “While John’s Gospel does not narrate the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, it underlies Jesus’ teaching on the gift of his body and blood throughout chapter 6.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Martin, Francis. *The Gospel of John* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture) (p. 115). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Jesus is the ever living Manna that God gave to the Israelites in the wilderness. He is the ongoing gift of God to the world. His body is now available to those who believe in him. Jesus is the life-giving power. There is a life in this holy sacrament.

There is a strong connection between Holy Communion and feeding the hungry. Holy Communion is a missionary sacrament. We eat from one loaf of bread, and we drink from one cup. We are in communion with Christ and with one another. Hence, Holy Communion teaches us to take care of each other and to share Jesus' love with the world. We are called to bring Jesus to those who are hungry. We are called to feed the hungry before we talk to them about Jesus.

The early church did not separate community meal from Eucharist. The term Eucharist comes from The Greek noun εὐχαριστία (eucharistia), meaning "thanksgiving." The early church practiced the Agape feast or Lovefeast before believers received Eucharist, Holy Communion. Christians rich and poor shared a communal meal. The hungry found food at the church. The Eucharist was often a part of the Lovefeast although, at some point (probably between the latter part of the 1st century A.D. and 250 A.D.), the two became separate. Can you see the connection between the Holy Communion/ Eucharist and feeding the hungry?

Soon we are going to break bread together during the service of Holy Communion. We are also going to break bread with the poor and hungry at the community dinner this afternoon. Holy Communion sends us on a mission to share bread with the hungry. So, we are called to extend the love of Christ to our community. I encourage you to join our church in providing food to the hungry. Let us offer our love and solidarity to those who are hungry.