

ORDINARY SUNDAY XX “B”

AUGUST 18/19, 2012

(Stewardship # 3)

A custom often carried out at wedding receptions is that of the bride and groom cutting the first slice of their wedding cake and feeding each other. This playful little ritual at one time carried the symbolism of how they would feed each other by giving their bodies in love.

God desires an intimate relationship with us. In the gospel Jesus offers *himself* as food so that, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we might remain in him and have life through him. This supreme gift of divine life Jesus gave us in sacramental forms through the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. Our eating and drinking of Jesus' life in the Holy Eucharist in the act of the reception of the divine gifts of bread and wine transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Holy Communion has a relational aspect. In sharing in the act of Holy Communion the believer is made a sharer in the divine love union of the Father and the Son. At the same time, the believer also shares in the lives of all fellow believers who also share in this same gift; those present here at Mass, as well as all who partake in its celebration throughout the world. Given its divine institution, the act of Holy Communion unites us with all who have, do now, and will in the future share in it as members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Jesus in his monologue on himself being the “Bread of Life” tells us as much: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (Jn. 6: 54). This is a startling and bold statement: intimate communion, eating and drinking of Jesus cannot end in death but continues on in eternal life.

There is a third dimension to our eating and drinking together with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Just as the little ritual of the bride and groom feeding each other with piece of their wedding cake traditionally symbolized all the many ways they are now called to feed each other as husband and wife, so too, we are called to feed each other, give our bodies in love in service to each other fulfilling the command of Jesus: **Do this in memory of me.**

In his command, “Do this in memory of me” Jesus teaches us that having been made the recipients of divine gifts, we ourselves now must become the “food” upon which others draw their nourishment and strength, their hope and joy, their compassion and consolation. Now *we ourselves* become the bread of life for others even as we have eaten and remain in Jesus. In terms of stewardship language we are called to share our “time and talent”. Our intimacy with Jesus calls us to the same intimacy with others. This kind of intimacy does not end but continues to everlasting life. One of the newly approved dismissal formulas that concludes the celebration of the Mass summarizes it well: **Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.** Our every word, our every action is called to be “bread” on which others feed and in doing so come to know the presence of God in their lives revealed through our personal commitment to being taken, broken, shared, poured out.

Over the past few Sundays I have been relating Jesus teaching on the Bread of Life and its ritual expression in the celebration of Holy Eucharist (the Mass) to the spirituality of stewardship. As I mentioned last weekend, the first “tithe” the first act of breaking bread for others is prayer—public prayer and daily prayer. Included in this weekend’s bulletin is an insert inviting all of us to personally commit to some form of daily prayer both as an expression of thanksgiving for the many forms of “bread” we have received from God and for others as an expression of solidarity, of being and giving “daily bread”. Please take time this week to study, reflect, pray and then choose at least one act of prayer commitment. Bring your completed form to Mass next weekend. They will be collected at the Preparation of Gifts and brought forward. They will then be put in a basket which will rest beneath the tabernacle as an on-going sign of our commitment to eucharistic stewardship spirituality.

Like Lady Wisdom in our first reading, we too are invited to set before others “rich fare”, the physical and spiritual divine gifts entrusted to our stewardship management. What is the bread God has given you to share?