

My grandmother was a great baker of bread. I remember the wonderful aroma in her kitchen, that tingly smell of yeast, the mild tones of fresh flour, and that indescribably delicious smell of bread baking. Her recipe, which was probably not written down, may well have come from her Grandmother. By today's standards, this dated recipe probably had a bit too much yeast in it. So when the bread baked, it rose very high, but then split open exposing some of the tender insides to the harsh oven heat. This tender heart of the bread became hard in this painfully hot environment, but this was the secret.

Later, when the bread had slightly cooled, my 7 siblings and I would attack with a knife, and butter! And that center, the flaw in the bread, had become like a sponge. It absorbed the hot melted butter, which the hard crust could not do. Yet it held onto it without falling apart which the tender insides could not do. This mistake in the bread, was what I loved most, it made it distinctive and gave the bread its special flavor. I wonder if God doesn't look on us in the same way.

We are a hungry people, we come here today, in part, due to our hunger. To a certain extent we are sure to be fed at the table of the Lord in prayer and communion; but just as the disciples shared in the last supper, not solely as consumers, so we are expected to go forth and feed others. Nice platitudes, but

not much more. It would be simple if we were really just taking about bread. But what if your hunger is more complex? And what if the bread you feed with is flawed?

Have you ever noticed how many books and magazine articles address the topic of changing your life? They are often at the top of the best sellers list; they tell us how to invest our funds, how to put life in our relationships, how to clear up clutter, and of course how to deal with our colleagues at work. I think they are all part of a symptom. We are a hungry people, but sometimes we don't know what we hunger for. I know, if I make zillions in the stock market, put zest in my relationships, and have a tidy room, then surely I will be satisfied. But such schemes, tempting though they be, only take our mind off of the deeper hunger inside. We are hungry, we are unsatisfied, and we live in a world that is far too unsure. We cannot count on our investments, our security even at home, nor on the wisdom of our leaders. In fact, we do not even know what to ask for on some level...we are just hungry. And if the only bread we have to feed with is ourselves, the food itself may not be as satisfying as we would like.

In a sense we should not be surprised. We are made in the image and likeness of a creator who is infinite. We each have a little bit of infinity inside us.

We are infinitely hungry; no amount of peace in the world, no amount of love in our hearts, no amount of security, or money, or justice, or self-expression is enough. We certainly do not understand this insatiable hunger, and so we delve deeper, deeper into our own hearts. But as we grow in learning our deepest desires, we come to a space where we are most like God. This insatiable hunger for good in every direction must be what God feels when she creates. This infinity of hunger is not a bottomless pit that swallows up bread, rather an eternal and inexhaustible spring bringing forth newness and creativity in the kingdom. It is because we hunger for justice, that we find strength to fight injustice. It is because we hunger for love, that we shape hearts to love those around us. It is because we hunger for honesty, that we find the depths of our true selves to be shared in intimacy. And thus we become Bread for the World.

Now I don't know about you, but sometimes when I am hungry, I am prone to a little crankiness. We see this in the Body of Christ as well. Sometimes our desire for justice is frustrated in our sinful world, not to mention our church, so our hunger for justice then makes us lash out usually at those closest to us. This is a flaw in our bread, our impatience, our dissatisfaction. I suppose God is slightly amused at this flaw. But sometimes, this dissatisfaction can become divorced from the good impetus that spawns it. It festers and grows into an anger no

longer oriented toward good, rather toward an insatiable self-satisfaction. Bread left out too long grows hard and stale. The flaw is no longer interesting, it is all encompassing. We notice it because the bread no longer nourishes others, it becomes barely self-satisfying. We can hunger for a larger role for laity in the church, without sourly disapproving of every church authority. We can hunger to express our piety in worship, without demanding attention that distracts others. We can hunger for peace in our world, without demanding security that oppresses the very Body of Christ.

I find that bread when it is a little less than fresh, can be made quite acceptable by warming it up a little. The toughness leaves it and that fresh aroma can even return. So how do we warm our stale bread? Maybe laughter is a good method. When we become self-absorbed, self-righteous, self-important, a little humor goes a long way in breaking the cycle of negativity that we impose. It lets us step back, see things from a distance and even take delight in our flaws. Maybe it brings us closer to the way God sees us? And with our priorities renewed we can once again be fresh Bread for the World. Fresh bread is eagerly taken and much needed in our world even when it is not perfect.

So let us pray that we, the Body of Christ, always be fresh bread for others.

We know that God takes delight in ourselves and our work. So let us go and do the same!