

A joyous Saturday evening to our beloved St Mary's church community and friends. Are you ready to hear about subversion, about our cosmic call, and about munching, about munching and meditating? That is what I have been doing in preparation for this homily, munching and meditating on these readings about bread, about manna, about Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

In John's gospel passage, the Greek word used four times translates to "munching on". In the Corinthian passage the word we read three times as bread is translated from the Greek term for LOAF. We are called to munch on Jesus, on the LOAF of life. We are members of that unified, divine infused LOAF. Munching and meditating on these readings, munching and meditating on the dramatic idea of eating Jesus' own flesh, drinking Jesus blood from the cup of blessing. For some this is a hard metaphor to swallow. For many Catholics who see Eucharist as a sacrament, an outward sign of an inward reality, we can understand deeply the living bread that continues to feed us, especially in these dark, frightening days and we are called to be life giving bread for others, and to trust our Divine Bread Baker.

In the Deuteronomy reading Moses reminded people of how God miraculously provided daily manna from heaven and water from a rock to get them through their wandering in the desert, fleeing their life as enslaved people, one day at a time, one moment of trust and one foot forward at a time. It wasn't easy. The Jews were lost, physically hungry and thirsty, humbled, frightened. Many millions of people in our country, immigrants, people who are not white skinned, people with low wage jobs, no savings account, no sought after skill sets, with medical conditions, could describe themselves similarly.

In John's gospel, the evangelist wrote at a time when the Pharisees, the temple leaders were giving the followers of Jesus a hard time, expelling them from the temples, even though they were Jews. John's gospel, speaking to the feast of Passover, offers its replacement in the Eucharistic meal; we are to munch on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the miracle of eternal life such faith offers. Two thousand years ago, Jesus had broken through history as the son of God and had shaken up the status quo.

And maybe on a grand scale, we have reached a tipping point in our nation where the status quo, the policies, the actions of those in positions of power and inactions, or insufficient actions, of those who could have done more, have been revealed and now increasingly may be seen as instruments of oppression that Jesus often addressed. That is where the SUBVERSION comes in. Walter Brueggemann, renowned Old Testament scholar encourages church leaders to have a sociopolitical imagination. And African American Bishop Edward Braxton American from Illinois says

that the lack of such an imagination is directly related to the horizon of possibilities that leaders can offer church members and the world at large. Let me say that again, spiritual and sociopolitical imagination is directly related to the horizon of possibilities that we can see, to which we can collectively aspire and to make manifest in our Church and nation. Brueggemann says preaching is never the dominant vision. Preaching needs to flesh out the version that lives under the dominant version- the SUBversion.

One example of the dominant version that can be missed is in the story of the loaves and fishes. In John's gospel, the author admits that the 5000 head count of people who were fed did not include a count of all the women and children present! To report on only the men reflected the dominant culture of patriarchy. Let that sink in. That means Jesus had a communal, miraculous meal and fed let's estimate, 20,000 people and the reporter only said 5000 were there. Think of how God's graciousness, God's miraculous generosity has been underreported!

Another example of the dominant version being presented relates to church art. St Joe's church in Vancouver, WA, has a mural behind the altar that was installed in 1973- 10 years after Vatican II. It depicts chiseled, iconic faced, white men being offered the chalice from a halo covered Jesus on one side and offered the host by a second halo covered Jesus with seated men between. All through Masses there I couldn't see myself, in fact I would get annoyed over and over, and I imagine many other women and many of the Filipino, Hispanic, African American parishioners couldn't and can't relate to that prominent, 1973 image of Eucharist. On a separate note, here at St Peter's on Beacon Hill there is a wonderful statue of standing Mary with Jesus tugging at her dress while she holds a broom. Now that is a statue that moves me, sweeps me in. And many of us have seen brightly painted, Salvadorian crosses showing a diverse group of men and women communing at the table with Jesus. As the bible has made clear, Jesus is open to dinner invitations from anyone and everyone.

At a 2017 lecture on the "Catholic Church and the Racial Divide in the US" Bishop Braxton said the Church continues to hang new art pieces that feature European looking people and that practice, among other issues does not bode well for the growth of parishes with African American members. The 2017-2018 Pastoral Letter on Racism entitled "Chastens" admits the Church has been on the wrong side of history too many times. Given the power structure in our patriarchal church, we need to ask, who is given the power to insure that the life of a parish is the work of all the people, using all the God given talents of each one? Do Catholic parishioners have the power to affect their Sunday liturgy, the use of their buildings, the art on their walls? At St

Mary's we all know, our Church building and the St Mary's Food Bank are LITURGY in the true sense of the word - the work of the people, people like Dick, Jorge, August, Diane, Felipe, John, Olivia, David, Don, Ernesto, Steve, Tricia, Terry, Kathy, Emmanuel, Ed, and many more people who toiled to make these buildings serve God's purposes.

In my munching and meditating on the topic of bread, I wanted to understand a bit about the science of growing grain. In the early days of agriculture, once nomadic hunters and wild grain gatherers established villages in order to expand their food supply through farming. My son Will's friend, Andrew, runs an organic farming collective while also farming his own rented acreage. My daughter Hannah and I spent a sunny couple hours on Andrew's Woodinville farm weeding the mixed bed of cilantro and beet plants. We learned that the smell of cilantro attracts predator wasps and hornets that eat the leaf miners that would otherwise feast on the leaves of the beet plants. He told us that salmon dying upstream fertilize the forests, which in turn filter our rainwater and provide us healthy clean water through the Cedar and Tolt River Watersheds. Such symbiotic relationships are called ecosystem services.

Earlier in his career, Andrew thought he would work in the industrial farming industry to help feed the world's poor with high yield, monoculture, GMO crops while also making a good wage. Then Andrew worked at the Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands Program and heartily participated in the communal meals at the Community Center. His heart was moved and his career ideas shifted to see the importance of diversity, of empowering new and young gardeners, of working to get more fresh produce to those on the margins while expanding market accessibility to local farmers. Food is the universal language we all speak. Food, especially shared meals, allow us to sit down and build relationships, in spite of our differences. That certainly happens at Communion at St Mary's and at churches around the world.

Lastly, we have a cosmic call that these three gospel readings announce. In my munching and meditating on the Miraculous meal we have in Jesus I revisited an expansive thought on what goes into making a loaf of bread that Fr Richard Rohr offers in his book, The Universal Christ. Of course, bread is made up of grain, salt, water, but without the sun's light and warmth, the soil, the minerals and elements within it, the rain, the labor to plant, care for, pick, transport and sell it, we would not have the grain, much less the complex, yet simple, and vital, food item- bread. In a way, like us, bread has the divine cosmos within it. And Jesus told us he is the Bread of Life, the Bread we need on our life's journey. In the 4th Century St Augustine added to this reality and said we must feed the body of Christ to the people of God until they know they are what they eat; we are the bread. Our lives, through our love, can be that

nourishing bread to a suffering friend, the gift of money to a non-profit, that public protester, or letter writer to people in power and in the media to insist on justice. The Spirit can recreate, can daily resurrect in new form the brokenness in our lives so that the divine creation that each of us is can better shine forth in response to the hunger of the world..... I want to end with a poem after we take 20 seconds of silence. It is written by Alla Renee Bozarth, a Russian, Celtic, Osage American poet, Episcopalian priest and soul caregiver.

Bakerwoman God

I am your living bread.
Strong, brown Bakerwoman God,
I am your low, soft, and being-shaped loaf.

I am your rising bread,
well-kneaded by some divine and knotty pair of knuckles,
by your warm earth hands.
I am bread well-kneaded.

Put me in fire, Bakerwoman God.
Put me in your own bright fire.
I am warm, warm as you from fire.
I am white and gold, soft and hard, brown and round.
I am so warm from fire.

Break me, Bakerwoman God.
I am broken under your caring Word.
Drop me in your special juice in pieces.
Drop me in your blood.
Drunken me in the great red flood.
Self-giving chalice swallow me.
My skin shines in the divine wine.
My face is cup-covered and I drown.

I fall up in a red pool
in a gold world
where your warm sunskin hand
is there to catch and hold me.

Bakerwoman God, remake me.