

In our politically correct world, what we eat and how much we eat are the subjects of countless features in the media. 'You are what you eat' is one of the catch phrases that rolls off the tongue and we know that it holds more than a grain of truth.

In the Gospels we often hear about Jesus sitting down to eat, and meals feature in a number of the parables. Even after the resurrection we hear of Jesus having breakfast with his disciples on the beach.

We know there is more to the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand than just the miraculous provision of food for a vast crowd caught unawares. We are given a clue in Isaiah, who reminds us that God will freely provide an abundance of good things for us. If this demonstrates how God wants generously to lavish on us what we need, it is also a reminder and an invitation to us to be similarly generous with one another.

This is one of the stories that appear in all four Gospels and, while Matthew, Mark and Luke do not mention 'a small boy', John tells us that he was the one who provided the meagre rations. Obviously he was willing to share, and it is not unreasonable to wonder whether his generosity may have prompted others to open their bags and share as well.

However it was that Jesus managed to provide for *everyone*, the message is loud and clear: he wants us all to be well fed and there should always be enough for everyone. As modern communications continue to shrink the world into a global village, we become more and more aware of the many who still go hungry, despite all the wonderful technological advances which mean that there is no reason why they should. In this lies a real challenge for us to examine our lifestyles and see whether we can live more simply, thereby ensuring that our Christian communities stand as a witness to the love and compassion of the Lord for those in need.

There is of course another aspect to this story, which points us towards the mystery of the Eucharist, where the one bread is shared as a sign that Christ wishes not only to provide for our bodies but for our souls as well. In the Eucharist we see Christ offering us himself as the Bread of Life, food for our souls. And of course here we speak of that mystery of eternal life: "Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever." The Eucharist is there in abundance for the disciples across the world in every generation and unites us all, making us the Body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise.

As you are sent forth from Mass today, ponder these great mysteries and pray for that sense of belonging to your brothers and sisters across the world and to all those faithful disciples who have gone before us and are now enjoying eternal life in heaven. Lord, make us witnesses to your concern that all be abundantly fed in body and in spirit.

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