

## SOME FOOD FOR THE HOMELESS

(Faced with the overwhelming problem of world hunger we can become paralyzed into inactivity. But there is always a little something we can do and if each of us did that....)

Back in June when our parish was buddying up with Saint Thomas Episcopal Church, I had dinner responsibilities for two small families. Two moms. One had a four year-old daughter. The second had a young teenage son and a fourth grade daughter. They were living on the hospitality of Interfaith Hospitality Network which is the area congregations who come together and offer their facilities to house families who have no place to live. They live in a particular house of worship for several weeks and then move on to another. Both of the moms had jobs but part time and were looking for full time work. Both had lost their homes because they could not pay. Both had grown up in areas rather far away from here and neither had a network of family or friends who could offer much assistance. They were just ordinary folk like anybody in this church today except—except they were homeless.

And for two weeks our parishioners fed them. I am sure it was difficult to have to entertain a priest at dinnertime and try to keep the conversation going. Neither was Catholic. They had very little to say about the food and no control over what was prepared. They were grateful but it was really hard to be the needy one. Thank you to those of you from Saint Anthony's who cooked for them and ate with them. Thank you for the meals you prepare and deliver to Aid for friends. Thank you for all the casseroles you cook and prepare for the men of Saint John's Hospice. Thank you for the 100 Life Straws you purchased for pure drinking water in Sierra Leone in Africa.

Do all of these things solve the problem of world hunger? By no means. But each is a small start. Each helps in some way to alleviate the hungers of the human family. Each sends a message—although we do not know you we care about you and desire to help you. It almost always starts with just one person.

Sometimes when faced with the magnitude of the hunger problem we can become like the apostles in the gospel today. They were paralyzed into inactivity. Until Jesus speaks. Then things change. It is interesting to note that the story we heard in the gospel is commonly referred to as the multiplication of the loaves. Even the Church in Galilee bears that name. However, when you read each of the accounts in the four gospels, the word

multiplication never appears. Jesus simply asks what resources are on hand, he blesses them and then begins to distribute them. It is amazing how far our resources, meager as they are, can go when we put them into God's hands, ask the Lord's blessing and then busy ourselves with the distribution.

My friends, we often fear there won't be enough in life. But in all the days you have been on this earth and with all the times you have worried whether there would be enough on how many days was there not enough? Thousands? Hundreds? Tens? A handful? None? Ask yourself: With all the planning how many times has there not only been enough but more than enough? How many times, indeed, are there leftovers—in any of our activities in this life, not just food? There are leftovers of all kinds. Notice that Jesus does not discard or disregard the leftovers in this moment. He has them collected. There's a use for them. That is how he sees things.

Waste nothing. Surely do not waste food. But learn to see the value in everything, even hunger. Waste nothing. Surely we must not waste our suffering. I have asked many people I know to offer up their suffering for another person undergoing a trial. Suddenly it is no longer suffering it is redemption. We must not waste our disappointment, our exhaustion. The Lord values everything and has a way that transforms everything that happens to us—and can transform in such a way that we are nourished. It almost always begins with one person—one person who believes. The Lord just does not believe that there is nothing that can be done. There is always something. We may not be successful but that is much less important. It is that we take the initiative.

A few weeks back there was a story on National Public Radio about a diner in a small town in America. The owner had experienced a falloff in customers and was going to have to do something. He could lay off a few of his workers or he could ask everyone to work one day without pay. That way everyone would still have a significant portion of their income and no one would lose all their income. That is what the employees decided on. But it was a small town, perhaps like Ambler, and when people learned of the situation and which day they would be working without pay, they decided to eat at the diner that day and leave larger tips than usual which ended up covering more than they would have made had they been paid. Everyone benefited from these decisions. But the intriguing thing is that the owner and employees had no idea that people would do this when they made their decision. It all began when one person learned and spread the word. My friends, the miracle is already within us. If only we realize it—and believe. It begins with just one person whose abundance makes him familiar with leftovers.