

Homily071220

## FROM WHEAT TO BREAD TO EUCHARIST

Usually Saint Anthony's celebrates First Communion on the last Saturday of April. This year that did not happen due to the Corona-virus. So, over fifty of our second graders were not able to make their First Holy Communion then. But some of those children will receive their First Communion this weekend, some next weekend, some on the first Sunday of August and the remaining children on the last Saturday of September.

The readings for this week feature Jesus' parable of the sower who is sowing grains of wheat in preparation of a harvest later on. Most of us have never done that and never will. Most of us go shopping for bread of various kinds. Very few of us come from a farming background. So I did a little research on wheat. It is usually planted in the fall of the year to be harvested seven or eight months later in the late spring or early summer. It takes that long for a single grain of wheat to grow to maturity—seven or eight months. And what does a ripe kernel of wheat look like after seven months? A ripe kernel of wheat looks like a small one quarter inch long bean with a crease down the center.

The kernels of wheat are first cleaned and all the excess debris from the wheat stalk is removed. Then the kernels are gathered and crushed, then what results is pushed through a fine screen, a sieve. That is how you make flour. Now there are different kinds of wheat which produce a variety of kinds of flour. They can actually be mixed and matched for different purposes. For different kinds of bread and other baked goods including bakery items. A large basket of kernels of wheat is called a bushel. It holds about sixty pounds of kernels of wheat. About one million kernels. One bushel of wheat makes about seventy loaves of bread.

It was God who created the wheat but we human beings have found a way to transform those kernels into some of the most delicious and most nourishing foods on the face of the earth. What has always fascinated me is that Jesus, when he looked for a way to continue to abide with us and stay with us, after his resurrection and his ascension into heaven, Jesus decided that he would become bread. Why? Because He knew how good bread is, how nourishing bread can be. Bread is both something that God provides but we human beings make. Bread is life-giving. Jesus too is life-giving in the very best of ways.

Jesus knew how bread was made. He knew that each kernel of wheat had to fall to the earth and die; each grain had crushed into a fine powder, a fine flour. When water is added and dough is made then the dough can be baked in a hot oven. Only then have we made bread. The bread that Jesus used at the Last Supper was called unleavened bread. Leaven is something that is added to wheat flour that makes the bread fluffier. The Last Supper bread has no leaven. It is flat bread. Jesus took that flat bread in his hands on the night before he died, and he blessed it and broke it and then gave it to his apostles. While he was doing this, he said to them: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it for this is my body which will be given up for you." Then Jesus gave a small portion of that bread to each apostle. That was the first time they received the consecrated bread. That was the moment of their first Communion.

Now it is time, two thousand years later and in a country far away from Israel, for children who are seven or eight years old to make their First Communion. Jesus came to you when you were first baptized as infants. He claimed you as His own and he poured his own Holy Spirit into you. Earlier this year Jesus came to you once again. That time he came as a God who forgives us our sins when we are sorry and name our sins. Baptism can only be received one time. Reconciliation can be received any number of times especially when we need to be forgiven. Holy Communion can be received many times too. Whenever you attend the Eucharist make a good Act of Contrition. Dear children, before you receive Communion thank Jesus for coming to you. After you receive Holy Communion and you return to your pew. Sit for a few minutes and just to talk to Jesus in your heart. Don't look around. Close your eyes and there in the quiet of your own heart tell him that you love him. Ask him to help you. Ask him to take care of your families. You cannot see him but He is there. He is real and if you are very still, you can begin to sense that Jesus is with you. That is how you become the good soil for the kernel of wheat that Jesus plants in you this day.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.