

What are you hungry for?

Perhaps, like 14% of Americans¹ including 1 out of every 5 children², you are hungry for food, three healthy meals a day, without worrying how to pay for it.

Perhaps, like David you have had to face the wrong you have done to others and you are hungry for forgiveness.

Perhaps you hunger for reconciliation, to restore a relationship that is broken.

Perhaps you hunger for healing, a rest from pain, anxiety, medications, and doctor's visits that manage but do not cure.

Perhaps you hunger for peace, for an end to the frantic rush of every day, the endless to do lists, demands on your time.

When Jesus said to his followers "I am the bread of life" he is offering to feed all of those hungers.

Last week we heard the story of the feeding of the five thousand a clear reminder that our faith in God is not just philosophy for the mind but justice for the body. Jesus knows we are human and we need to eat.

But this week Jesus learns that the way to our hearts is indeed through our stomachs, and some of us are content with that. But Jesus is not. Some who are fed see an entrepreneurial opportunity, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" they ask, meaning, "How can we perform the magic you do and never be hungry again and maybe even become rich and famous for our skills?" But Jesus feeds the five thousand people because with stomachs growling they could not receive the true bread he is offering, the bread of forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and peace. "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

On Friday I traveled down to Daley Plaza with Sandra, to attend a prayer service sponsored by the Metropolitan Council of Churches, an august body begun by Cardinal Bernadine and our own Bishop Griswold with leaders of every major religious body in the Chicago Metro area.

It was a beautiful rainbow of humanity on the stage. Christians in collars and stoles and the long black cloak, hat and staff of the Orthodox bishop, the salvation army leader in military uniform, the yellow robe of the Buddhist, the headscarf on the Muslim woman, the Sikh in a turban, the sari of the Hindu, the Jewish Yarmulka, and

¹ http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/us_hunger_facts.htm

² <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/04/21/3429174/feeding-america-hungry-kids/>

the tall hat I'd never seen on the head of a Zoroastrian, and street clothes on the Baha'i woman and other enlightened and comfortable representatives.

We heard prayers and passages from scriptures from all the various traditions, thankfully for me, a woman from the Baptist tradition sang in the gospel tradition, which was perhaps the richest feast of all, and we remembered those killed at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston and those killed at The Armed Forces Career Center in Chattanooga. We prayed for peace and an end to religious and racial bigotry and violence.

But I wondered what it meant, well, why it mattered. Those of us gathered were friends, colleagues and parishioners of the leaders on the stage. We already believed, agreed with the tenets found in every religion, of peace and respect among people of every race and creed. Certainly the leaders of government ignore the protest of the day held outside the Daley Center. Maybe the people working the food trucks saw something new, people of diverse faiths and races loving and not hating. But did it matter that we were there? Everyone else was at Loolapooloza!

Symbols matter. I believe they do, or I wouldn't be the leader of a faith that uses symbols to make real the spiritual truths of God. To be a Christian you need a river of water, a loaf of bread, and a jug of wine, says Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber of the The Church for all Sinners and Saints, our faith is physical.

Water really washes us clean, bread and wine really feed us, oil and the touch of human hands is healing, light brings clarity, rings bind us together, dirt really buries us.

The sacraments of baptism, Eucharist, Anointing, Marriage and Burial feed us and bring us forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and peace. Jesus is the bread of life.

At the end of the prayer service in Daly Plaza nine young men and woman came forward to read statements of belief. Their religious affiliations were not so obvious from their dress, but their words spoke volumes.

An African-American man, Malcolm Boyd said "I refuse to believe that we are so bound to racism and war that peace, brotherhood and sisterhood are not possible."

Jessica Clark said "I believe that right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant."

Taherea Ahmed, a Hindu woman, said "I believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits."

Tears were my bread that day.