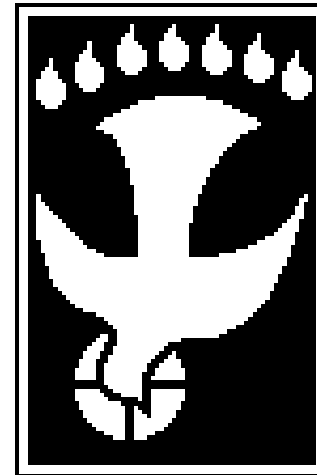


The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost



**Parish of the Epiphany
August 2, 2009**

The Reverend Roger E. Nelson

spirit-filled opportunity is offered to us, so seize the moment that God is offering you, and do not turn away. A life well lived should not only be one whose daily faithfulness is counted as righteousness; it should also be one whose had flashes of passion, when a holy fire consumed you for a few weeks or months and you stepped out of the box, lived out your faith in a moment of truth. Like the prophets, you are not crazy when you are so consumed by God; you are more alive that ever before.

Let me close by drawing your attention to the centrality of Jesus in all this. His spoken words, read and preached in scripture, applied to the circumstances of the present day and age are the very foundation of all we believe. We need to hear them as narrative and as exhortation, as stories that rise above the limitations of their original settings and speak to us of eternal truths.

We also need to be fed on spirit and mind and soul by the Body and Blood of Jesus week after week. We cannot go through life without his strength within us. Whether it be the weekly routine of work, home and play; or whether it be one of those bursts of holy energy that lifts us above the normal for a moment; neither is possible without the nourishment, the life-enabling power that is the Jesus of the Gospel stories, the sacramental Jesus of bread and wine.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

So why hunger or thirst in this life? Come to Jesus and find refreshment and rest.

Pentecost 9
John 6:24-35
August 2, 2009

The Reverend Roger E. Nelson

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Then Jesus said to (the people) . . . The Bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world . . . I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Last Sunday we heard how Jesus fed 5000 people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. The bodily hunger of the people was so satisfied; they ate until full and there were 12 baskets of bread left over. Then we are told that Jesus had to flee, because the crowds were so amazed that that they were ready to make anyone who could fill their stomachs their king. And under the cover of night, Jesus and his disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee to their homes in Capernaum.

Most of the crowd then dispersed, but we are told in today's gospel some remained until the next morning. Upon hearing that Jesus was now in Capernaum they themselves Got into boats and crossed over to find Jesus again.

Which are you? After hearing Jesus and being fed by him, do you then return to your house and resume your ordinary

daily routine? Or, do you catch some of the fire of the Holy Spirit and find yourself all of a sudden open to doing something you might not ordinarily consider? Do you find yourself on an unexpected journey seeking a fuller understanding of Jesus, pulled across unknown waters to a new and strange shore?

Now I do not ask this question in order to divide you into two groups—those who make Jesus a normal part of their daily lives as opposed to those who are overwhelmed by religious passion. I do not seek to separate you; but rather to remind you that in actuality you all belong to both groups.

Coming to church on a Sunday is much like going to hear Jesus preach 2000 years ago. We hear the Word of God as spoken by the prophets and saints, and in the Gospel, by Jesus himself. And we are also fed by God, though not with mere bread and fish to fill our stomachs, but with body and blood of Christ to empower our spirits. In a sense what happened on that shore of the Galilean Sea so many centuries ago, happens right here at Epiphany every Sabbath Day at 8:00 am, 10:00 am and 5:00 pm.

Then most of us, like most of the 5000, return to our homes and resume our daily lives. After all, bills must be paid, children must be fed, the lawn needs to be watered (though maybe not this year). As I have heard many, many times over my career; one reason we all go to church is to gain some kernel of truth, some nugget of wisdom, some word of strength or comfort that will carry us through the coming week. That is a perfectly legitimate reason to go to church each week, though I would hasten to add that it should not be the only reason. Our worship does much more than that, and at its best, transforms us body and mind, spirit and

soul.

‘There are times in our lives, however when going to church regularly to hear and be fed by Jesus, causes us to discover some passion that takes us in a new direction. We continue in our daily lives, but a new intensity enriches and changes us.

For example, the feeding of the 5000 may suddenly awaken us to the reality that there are at least 5000 persons within a 5 mile radius of us who are literally hungry. So we add something new to our lives. It may be something very simple, like Ernest Hickin who each week would come and empty the shopping basket of food and deliver it to a food pantry. Or it may be much more complicated; you decide to volunteer once a month at the local food pantry and after four years you find yourself on the Board of Directors.

For example, you see on Sunday a particularly memorizing shaft of light coming through one of the stained glass windows. If you are an artist, it inspires a new painting or a new dance, or a new music composition. If you are a home decorator it helps you visualize a new color scheme. If you are a scientist, it suggests the complexity and beauty of creation.

For example, a member of the congregation gets up one Sunday morning and says she would like to start an AIDS ministry in South Africa. Within a year, others are drawn into this vision and the parish has a ministry at Ekuvukeni Parish.

What I am saying is that there are times when God causes a certain passion to arise within our spirits, and we should not ignore it. Test them and if they seem true, throw yourself into them. It is, after all, not very often that such a