

Food for thought

If the tempter in today's Gospel was asking a hungry Jesus to turn stones into loaves of bread *literally* – that would have indeed been a miracle. But actually there is nothing miraculous (although indeed marvelous) about human beings changing stones into buildings and bridges and aqueducts and vegetation into wheat, rice, produce such as you find in the market place and matter into fuel such as coal, oil, gas, even nuclear energy to heat, cook our food, propel our mobility . . . into steel to produce rails for high speed trains, and pots and pans, flying machines and military hardware. . . .

There is something about us as *simply human beings* that knows how to turn the whole of our globe – once dormant with possibilities – into almost anything we want – including loaves of bread. And, of course, once we started exchanging the things we produce and invented money to facilitate such exchanges, then *money* becomes for many the main attraction and people crave it more than the products themselves. In other words money becomes the “bread” we long for – to be accumulated by what we used to call millionaires but now billionaires! – without the performance of any miracle but just shrewd business skills. So the key line in today's Gospel is *not* the tempter's: *If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.* Any energized human being can do that – industrially. No, the key line in today's reading is the one spoken by Jesus: *One does not live by bread alone . . .*

None of the material things we consume, none of the “bread” we invest in the stock market, that we store not only in barns but in banks, will satisfy what makes us truly human. *We hunger for so much more than that.* What is it Jesus says in the Gospel of John? *I have a food to eat which you know not of . . .* and elsewhere in Matthew: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice . . .* Jesus is speaking of a hunger we all have aside from material comfort – a hunger to become saints! To be deep, caring, awake to the wonder of nature and its Source, to draw on an energy that issues from our very Creator, making us creative and not just belabored from day to day.

The whole Sermon on the Mount makes that clear. *If someone presses you to go a mile with him, go with him two miles; if someone takes you to court over your shirt, give him your coat as well. You have been told to love your neighbor and hate your enemy? But I say to you: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.* Rather than live as if you have to clutch everything close to your breast for fear of losing it – Jesus challenges you to live to excess – instead of consume, overflow. Why? Because that's what makes you truly human! Generosity, eagerness to learn, to BE and not just exist.

Pharisees criticize Jesus for healing people on the Sabbath. They would restrain the grace in us that can make us saints. But Jesus cures people on the Sabbath anyway; what better time to do good than on the holiest day of the week??

Don't short change your life – before it's over – for as *a human being you were made by God to live not on bread alone but by every word, every invitation to grow, all the poetry that comes forth from the mouth of God.*

