

## Homily for Twelfth Sunday after Trinity at Stapleford: 18-08-24 based on Proverbs 9:1-6 and John 6.51-58

### *Sharing in the body of Christ*

Continuing the bread of life theme currently running through our Sunday services, we start with Wisdom acting as hostess, seeking to share what she has with others. Lady Wisdom is considered to be the manifestation of God's wisdom, and was at his side as he created our world. Note that she calls to the mentally challenged to share her bread and wine, and to walk 'in the way of insight'. From the point of view of humankind's limited understanding of God, it's a call to every one of us. The Old Testament presents many examples of hospitality, setting a trend that flows through into the New Testament, and through Jesus' teachings.

Now the gift of wisdom includes understanding, discernment and insight. Turning to our Gospel reading, the crowds that had been following Jesus round Galilee seem to be somewhat lacking on that front. Jesus is at pains to describe to them who he is and what he signifies. He uses the analogy of bread to help them to understand, but those listening take him rather literally. Paradoxically, the literal sense is a good place to start understanding what he means. After all, bread is food - it nourishes, is a staple of life, and is even nicer when shared. And these are all ways of describing Christ himself.

But as we now know, Jesus' meaning went a lot deeper. It's easy, from our perspective, to see his words as pointing to the Last Supper. They are reflected in our Communion Service where we hear the priest say '*Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me*'. Jesus' words, 'the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh', point to the cross where his body will be broken for us.

Earlier in this chapter, we heard how Jesus fed the 5000 with an abundance of loaves. When Jesus invited them to sit and eat, I wonder what their expectations might have been. Considering the lack of obvious resources, they would not have expected everyone to be fed –

and yet all of them ate until they had had their fill. It's unlikely too that they ate in complete silence, for here was an opportunity to get to know their neighbour, to discuss what they had seen and heard - a chance to relax in the company of others, to build and strengthen relationships. Jesus wasn't simply providing food to nourish their bodies; he was offering spiritual nourishment and a promise - a promise that in him, understanding and bonds of friendship and would grow stronger.

Jesus is referred to as *the living bread* – perhaps an easier image for today's listeners to grasp than for those crowds 2000 years ago. When Jesus talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, those early listeners didn't understand that his words were an invitation to believe and a promise of eternal life. We, probably more with the benefit of hindsight than of wisdom, have a far better understanding of what that means. We also know that we are being invited into a relationship with him, one which is sealed at our baptism. That relationship deepens through a life of shared worship, prayer, and the Eucharist.

Jesus shared his invitation to consume the living bread with everyone, Jew and gentile alike. That invitation continues to be extended to us all today, and we in turn are tasked to share it with others. May we live out our Baptismal promises and bring the light of Christ to those in our communities by sharing with them, perhaps over a cuppa and cake, our time, our gifts, or just a sympathetic ear.

In the name of Christ, amen.