

Reflection for John 6:35, 41-51 Trinity 10

Each week millions of Christians around the world come to church to seek nourishment. We pretty much all do it in different ways, but we are united by the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Today, Jesus tells us quite explicitly that He is the bread of life. But what does that mean to us in our journey towards a deeper relationship with Him?

Let's start with that word – nourishment. It's used a lot in Christian circles. We seek nourishment from the scriptures, we seek nourishment from the Eucharist, we seek nourishment from prayer, we seek to nourish others – feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, care for the broken.

We often differentiate between those two things however don't we? We nourish ourselves with scripture, the Eucharist and prayer – but we nourish others with food, shelter and care. This isn't deliberate. We come to church and we chose to receive the nourishment of the sacraments but do those who seek out our help seek only to be nourished with earthly food?

Have we become so moulded by the secular world and its desire to see us confine our Love of Christ to our church buildings on Sundays that we cannot nourish all?

We know from Jesus that our life in Him – our relationship with him – is born of two parts.

First – '*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me*'. What is Jesus saying? Is He saying that our desire alone to know Him is not sufficient?

We do not come to Jesus through our own reasoning, through our own thought-out deductions and some personal insight that we gain through years of experience and reading. We are drawn. We are invited. It is not through our religious experience, our philosophical insight or the fact that our parents brought us to church every Sunday that results in our own decision to say 'I Believe'. It is the Father who invites us – who draws us to Him. It's what we do at that invitation that matters.

Our faith is born through a two-way relationship with the Father and that relationship is renewed, strengthened and encouraged through the

constant re-offering of the nourishment that only the Church can offer. Through the sacraments, through teaching, and through prayer.

And that brings me to the second part of our relationship with Jesus – that it can only grow and can only deepen through the Church. The Church is the body of Christ. It is the only path through which the sacraments are offered. Without this nourishment we will go hungry. We will go thirsty we will be denied the living bread.

And so, knowing this – knowing this tough reality that sits against the grain of the modern world- how does that play out in our daily lives?

What I am saying is that as a Church and as the body of Christ we cannot simply offer people bread when they need bread to fill their stomachs. But that we must offer everyone the bread of life all the time and that those things are not separate but are the same.

We must push back against a world that tells us that our faith must be confined to our buildings. So that when we step out into the world to feed the hungry we are doing so not just in body, but also in the Spirit. We are making Christ's love known so that people may be drawn to Him and may hear his invitation. And sometimes that's as much as we can do – be a physical and obvious presence of the Church in the secular world. And that's okay.

I know some of you may be thinking that it is easy for clergy to be that obvious presence because wearing our dog collars marks us out as a representative of the church but trust me there are often times when the collar is more of a hindrance than a help

Being an obvious and physical presence is about how we care. Are we the neighbours who notice others in our streets, who stop to speak even when we are in hurry? Are we the people who buy a sandwich or a drink for those living on the streets? Are we the friends who keep up the contacts with those we don't often see? Are we the people who offer to help even when we are not sure what help we can provide?

And when we are asked why are we doing any of these things do we reply because God loves you and has asked me to show you His love?

Through these actions we save nobody. Only God does that. But we who have been invited to eat the living bread, and to drink from the healing, life-giving stream can bear witness. We bear witness to the

abundant life that we have in Christ. Yes, there is choice to be made but it is not ours alone. Yes we must hear the invitation, yes we must invite, others so that they may also hear – if the Father chooses – the invitation. Then, if accepted, it is our job to feed those who have turned to Him. Nourish them with the sacraments, with prayer, with love and encourage them to bring others to hear the invitation of the Father.

Prepare yourselves. Prepare to receive Christ, to be open as he once again reaches for your hearts and then take Him in to the world and bring others to come to know him.

Amen.