

Corpus Christi, 6/2007

1. Sometimes when you attempt to thank someone for a good deed, you get into deep trouble, because in thanking one person you forget to thank someone else who should also be thanked. That is my situation today because I want to thank all the women here who have spent their lives cooking for others. I think first of all of mothers of family, but clearly there are many non-mothers of families who have done this as well, e.g., single people who have cooked for their aging parents and other members of their families. In fact, I suppose that there are only a few of us who have not cooked for others. This group would not even include all the men in the community because today we have been liberated and now cook for others.

2. In any case I was going to ask all of you to stand up so that we could recognize your service. But, on second thought, lest we offend someone, let us all remain seated and do our thanking quietly.

3. For the moment let us to return to the stereotype of the cooker for others, the mother of a family. Let us say that this mother has two children. Now it takes about twenty years to rear a child.

Therefore, supposing that this mother's two children are separated by five years, that would mean that she has spend twenty-five years of her life cooking for her children. That means 365 meals per year, and for twenty-five years that equals 9,125 meals. What is involved in getting a meal? First an idea: What are we going to have to eat tonight? Second, the buying of the food. Third, the preparation. No wonder a mother might not want to cook after 9,000 meals.

4. Do you think that most mothers think of all this work as their way of serving their families? I don't think they do, at least not in a very conscious way. They are just doing what comes naturally. After all, nature introduces them to this service when their children are born. They feed the child with their own milk. And after that, well, it is just doing what comes naturally. These are my children. I brought them into the world. Now I have to feed them.

5. But suppose we consciously label this natural phenomenon of feeding children as a service. We are justified in doing so, for it is certainly that. Indeed, it is the most needed service a child must have. And suppose we now reflect on the fact that it is God who teaches mothers in and through their bodies to provide this service. And suppose we now extend this service to God himself. Or should

I say herself. Does God feed us? The answer is yes. God has created the world which is our garden. It feeds us. And when God revealed Himself to the Jews, He revealed himself as the Provider. He feeds them in the desert. And when we apply this to the New Testament, to the revelation of God given to us in Jesus, we see that here again God and his Son Jesus come to us as those who feed us. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves for the hungry people is the most recorded of all the miracles in the Gospels. It appears six times in them. And then the Lord Jesus gave his disciples the memorial gift of his presence among them in the bread and wine which he identified for them as his body broken for them, as his blood poured out for them. He becomes our food. He feeds us with his own self, like a mother nursing her child.

6. For us who take part in this memorial meal weekly, even daily, this meal is at least two things. First, it is a reminder of Jesus' sacrificial love, his service, of us, his giving of his life for us. Second, it is a reminder to us that in accepting such a gift we must do the same with our own lives, pour them out for him and for his brethren. Let us feed our families. Let us feed our world. That is what the Eucharist should teach us to do.