

## REFLECTION FOR FRIDAY 3rd WEEK OF EASTER

### JOHN 6:52-59

Some of you have heard the story of my birth; how I was due to be born on 1<sup>st</sup> December but ended up being born on 16<sup>th</sup> December.

When I was born, I weighed 4kg. In my first year of life, I was well aware of the fact that I was hungry. So, I ate... and ate. By the time of my first birthday, I weighed 14kg!

Then, something happened. Apparently, I forgot that I was hungry. Or I lost touch with that fact. My mother tried her best to get me to eat. But I wasn't hungry. So, by the time I turned two years old, I weighed 13kg.

Finally, my mom took me to see Doctor Anthony, who was an old-school family doctor. Doctor Anthony weighed me, looked at my eyes and ears. He felt my knees and elbows. Then he declared: "There is nothing wrong with him."

My mother protested: "But he won't eat, and he has hardly gained any weight in a year!" Doctor Anthony said, "When your son gets hungry, he'll know to start eating again."

A few weeks later, I rediscovered the fact that I was hungry. So, I started eating again.

That story has become a legend in the life of our family – it gets retold at parties. And I think this story has lasted in our family because things like hunger and thirst are so basic to human existence, aren't they? As one author said, "Lots of people live without love or hope, but no one can live without food or water."

Hunger is about survival. Thirst is about living.

Many of us are so blessed. We do not have to worry about where our next meal is coming from, even during a world-wide pandemic. But many of our neighbours do have to worry about where the next meal might come from. The economic impact of this virus on some families is serious.

Even if you and I are not faced with that fear right now, there are still times in our lives when we are acutely aware of how hungry, and thirsty, we are. It's about living, flourishing.

While our most basic hungers are for the food that keeps us alive, isn't it true that there are times in our lives when we become aware of the fact that we are hungry for other kinds of things ... deeply yearning for something to help us flourish... hungry for the things which fulfil our lives?

We don't just need food and drink to keep us alive.

A scientist named Ashleigh Montague wrote a book called "Touching," and noted the results of a study which seemed to prove that human new-borns can survive longer without food and drink than they can if they are deprived of human touch. In other words, according to this study, new-borns need touch more than they need food or drink.

Right now, many of us have become aware of how much we hunger for, how much we need, human touch.

How many grandparents are hungry for the hug of their grandchild right now? How many grieving family-members hunger for the consoling embrace of a friend as they deal with the death of a loved one? How many of us just hunger for a time when we can shake hands with a neighbour? We are aware that we hunger for touch.

In addition to food, and drink, and touch, what else are we hungry for right now?

+ We hunger to be recognised and honoured,

+ We hunger to love and be loved,

+ We hunger to be listened to, to be appreciated,

+ We hunger for truth, for meaning in life,

+ We hunger for forgiveness,

+ We hunger for companionship.

+ some of us are hungering for a world in which people do not have to flee their homeland in order to find security, freedom or opportunity. That's the kind of world in which no one is forced to become a refugee.

+ many of us are hungry for a world where the elderly are cared for in a way that keeps their safety and dignity intact. We're hungry for a world in which health care workers are honoured for their courage and generosity. We're hungry for a world where fear does not force us to wear masks.

+ So many of us are hungry for a life that has meaning and purpose. We are hungry for a life with authentic relationships and deep-seated joy.

Many Christians during this pandemic have expressed that this quarantine has given them time to think and pray about their lives in a new way. They are getting in touch with what they really want their life to be like moving forward. In other words, in these days, they are getting in touch with their deepest hungers in life.

Yes, there can still be times when we are like a 13kg, one year old boy. For a moment, we somehow forget that we are hungry for these authentic things. We can forget. We have a constant stream of gadgets, messages, social media and entertainment, to distract us from what is real, either in our life or the lives of others.

As Doctor Anthony said, eventually we will remember that we are hungry. Hungry for what matters. Hungering for what is real. And then we will know to eat.

In that moment, the decisive question is: where do we turn when we know that we are hungry? Where do we turn for sustenance and nourishment? Where do we turn for what matters the most?

So much of our culture tells us that our fulfilment is found in all the things that really cannot satisfy us: entertainment, the next tweet, the newest game to be played on the 'smart' phones. We are told that our hungers will be satisfied by the next purchase, the next promotion, the next bad relationship, the next web page, the next drink. You know how that works. Actually, you know how this doesn't work.

We can try to fulfil our yearning with all those things – but we discover that they are of emptiness.

Only God can satisfy our various forms of hunger. "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" – St Augustine.

So, we are aware that we are hungry. We are ready to eat. And along comes Jesus in today's Gospel, and he says: I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

We know we are hungry, and Jesus says: Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.

We know we are hungry for authentic nourishment. And along comes Jesus, who says: My flesh is true food. My blood true drink. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

We should not forget, this food, the gift of the Eucharist, this gift cost him everything, his very life. So, remember that every time you receive Holy Communion, the bread of life, you are receiving a gift that comes at a very high price. Christ gave away everything, his very life, so that you could have life.

For a while, we can forget that we are hungry. But Doctor Anthony is right. Eventually, we rediscover the fact that we are hungering and thirsting, not for something, but for someone. And his name is Jesus. And he is the bread of life.

If you have become aware of a deeper hunger, then listen to Jesus - he will nourish you. He nourishes you with his life-giving word that is found in the scriptures.

Are you hungry? Jesus will nourish you with his life-giving Spirit.

Are you hungry? Jesus will nourish you through the people sitting next to you, through the people who will inspire you, through the people you will meet as you serve others in Jesus' name.

Jesus will nourish your deepest hungers in the beauty of creation, in music and art, in the experience of human kindness, generosity, patience, understanding, hope, love, grace and blessing.

Fr Patrick