

"HAVE YOU ANYTHING HERE TO EAT?"

[Jesus] stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ... While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

This is one of my favorite Scripture passages because of the apparent absurdity of the divine Jesus who simply appeared in their midst, and the human Jesus who paused, amidst his efforts to convince his disciples that he was not a ghost, to ask for food.

Even the Son of God gets hungry.



Every encounter with someone suffering is another opportunity to help Jesus in disguise. Jesus made this clear in the Gospel passage known as the Last Judgement. Every hungry person is a hungry Jesus. So yes, even the Son of God gets hungry, and no, we can't miss our opportunities to feed man and God.

Our opportunity to feed Jesus in disguise extends beyond our personal encounter with the hungry woman visiting the soup kitchen. It extends beyond our compassion to donate to the parish food collection. We have the opportunity to ensure that the structures of our culture "feed the hungry."

When our structures fail to live up to this obligation and others like it, Saint John Paul II called this "social sin:" the sins of our structures. He explained, "The sins of individuals strengthen those forms of social sin which are actually the fruit of an accumulation of many personal sins." Citing the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, he said, "Whenever the Church speaks of situations of sin, or when she condemns as social sins certain situations or the collective behavior of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.... The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals."

We confess our personal sins when we recite the Confiteor to begin mass. It is a personal prayer that we say communally. Consider this: is the Confiteor more than an oral admission of our personal sins? Is it also a communal admission of our communal sins, those that are committed by the sinful structures through *our* thoughts and in *our* words, in what *we* have done and in what *we* have failed to do?

After eating, Jesus said to the disciples, "Thus it is written that ... repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in [Christ's] name."

And so, in Christ's name, Peter spoke straightforwardly to the people "The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead ... before empathizing "Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did ... Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away."

And in Christ's name, John wrote to the Christian community "if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world."

As one body let us confess our sins that contribute to the structural sins of our culture. Let us repent and ask for forgiveness. Then, as one body, let us ensure that the structures of our culture "feed the hungry" because the Son of God is hungry.

(Based on the Readings for the Third Sunday of Easter)