

When my parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, they went on a cruise in Alaska. It surprised everyone else in the family. We had no idea they had any interest in Alaska, but they had a wonderful trip, except for one incident. At mealtime on board the ship, Mom often had salmon. But one night she noticed that Dad wasn't having any of it. Then she realized he had not eaten any salmon at all since they began the cruise. So, she said to him, "Alaska is famous for king salmon. Why aren't you having any?" He said, "I never really liked salmon." Mom couldn't believe her ears. She asked Dad, "For 50 years I've been making salmon loaf on Fridays, and now you tell me you never liked it?" Now, I'm not married, but even I know there are ways to answer that question, and there are ways not to answer that question. Dad said, "You can eat almost anything if you put ketchup on it." This is not how you show appreciation. After they got home, Mom found herself watching at every meal what else Dad smothered with ketchup.

God gives us many blessings, but we do not always appreciate them. There is some food we don't like; there are some people we don't like; there are some days we don't like – but they are all gifts from God. Whenever we're not happy, we tend to think God isn't good. God is good; we just don't always notice it. We can always enjoy the beauty of the Missouri countryside, the companionship of other people, the playfulness of children, or the flight of a hawk. God surrounds us with beauty, but we do not always take the time to notice or to thank God for these gifts.

The verses from today's responsorial psalm are about food. They are used as a meal prayer in some monasteries and convents: "The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them their food in due season; you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." We use that psalm today because the gospel and the first reading tell of situations where people needed food, and God worked a miracle for them. Here in northwest Missouri, God works miracles; we grow more food than we could possibly eat. Yes, our farmers have to work at it, and we don't appreciate their labor enough, but the soil, the seed and the rain are all miracles; they are signs of how generously God gives us things to eat.

Ironically in our abundance we do not always notice how good God is. Surprisingly, when we have less, we discover God's goodness. Our friends in Tanzania had small crops last year, but they are still rich in hospitality. One hundred fifty years ago the potato famine caused immigrants to leave Ireland and come here. They had few possessions, but they were rich in faith, rich in love for their family, and rich in the skills of pioneers.

Everybody's got some food we don't like. And everyone receives blessings we never acknowledge. Before we begin eating, we owe God a prayer of thanks, whether that's at home or at church. And if we're not happy with life, it may be we just haven't stopped long enough to notice. "The hand of the Lord feeds us," today's psalm says. "He answers all our needs."