

You're hungry. You go to the counter. You order what you want. Within minutes at a fast food, you're eating what you're hungry for. If you were eating at home it would take a lot more time and who knows you might be hungry for something else by the time you were done. The contest among fast food services is to win our appetite. They survive not just if we're hungry, but if we're hungry for what they have.

Marketing matches products with hungers. When it really succeeds, it creates a hunger where there was none before.

Life creates hunger every day. We hunger to be entertained, to be successful; we hunger for friendships, for touch. Sometimes we hunger for the wrong things--for too much affection in a casual relationship, for personal comfort at someone else's expense. Some people hunger for friendships with the famous, as if a brush with celebrity will make their lives worth more.

This is the problem Jesus faces in the gospel. The people have hungers, and they're anxious to be fed, but they're hungry for the wrong thing. What's tricky here is that they're hungry for Jesus, but for Jesus the celebrity, not for Jesus the bread of life. They're hungry for Jesus who can do tricks, not for Jesus who will ask them to change their thinking and their behavior. Jesus tells them he is bread; not just bread for the tummy, but bread for the brain, bread for the heart. He's not in the business of baking, but in the business of taking people from where they are to where they could be.

What Christianity offers is a way of life which will satisfy the hungers of our soul. What the Catholic Church offers is a way of life which will satisfy our hungers for community, sacrament, and promise. Our hungers growl at significant times in our lives: when someone we trust makes a surprising decision, when illness or accident arrive unwelcome at our doorstep, or when doubts we've kept suppressed for the longest time grow too large to be ignored. Sometimes we satisfy those hungers in the wrong way--through addictions, through violence, by withdrawing, or by demanding. Jesus, the bread of life, will satisfy our hungers. Turn to the scriptures, turn to the sacraments, turn to the community of the church. We'll find there what we're hungry for.