

I want you to imagine that you have come here today not for Mass, but for dinner. Imagine that you are all seated at tables instead of in pews. All of you from the organist up to this aisle, imagine that your tables are long and rough-hewn, and that on the edge of them there is a pile of green plastic bowls. You people in this section, imagine that you are at picnic tables with red checkered table cloths. And those of you in this small section on the far side of the church, imagine that you are seated at round tables with tablecloths and cloth napkins to match, china edged in gold leaf, fresh flowers, and candles.

Now imagine here in the center of the church the largest pot of macaroni and cheese you've ever seen. This is dinner for those of you at the long rough-hewn tables. You can each have 3 spoonfuls, but you'll have to stand in line to get it. For you at the picnic tables we have baloney sandwiches, but you have a choice: You may also have macaroni and cheese if you like. And for those of you at the round tables, we have eight chefs in the sacristy ready to serve you a seven-course meal, with steaks cooked to your order. However, if you wish, you may also have baloney sandwiches or macaroni and cheese, or both, or everything. It's yours to choose.

This dinner actually happened here in Kansas City at one of our parishes. The meal created a microcosm of how food is distributed unevenly around the world. What happened that night in our Kansas City parish was beautiful. Those people, who had everything, and these, got up from their tables and shared the food from their plates with those who had little. They multiplied their loaves.

The point of the story is that people are good. People are generous if they see the need. But most of us don't know the world's hungry. Television specials and junk mail show pictures of hungry people. But since refrigerators and cupboards surround us, those large-bellied children seem far, far away.

The Catholic Worker House of Kansas City provides food for our hungry people. The workers there estimate that in Jackson County alone we have over 11,000 homeless people, and 40% of them are children. The hungry may seem far away, but they are in our back yard.

The people who heard Jesus speak on the hillside in today's Gospel arrived that morning as a crowd. But they left that evening as a community. What little they had they shared. No one wasted food. No one left hungry.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus calls us to community. Society calls us to individuality: We drive alone to work, few people live in our households, sidewalks disappear from our neighborhoods. We live ever more alone. Jesus calls us from our private lives to care for the world.

I belong to an organization called Bread for the World. All across the country we write our senators and representatives to have them vote for bills which will provide relief for the hungry at home and abroad. There are certainly other ways to get involved: Read books, read the papers, know something about the issues. Then, we too can multiply our loaves, so that none may go hungry.