

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Dec 4th 2013

Advent is a time that I often catch myself dreaming of home. The celebration of a recently married couple inviting a new member into their family always makes my heart yearn for my own family. It truly is a time when I simply want to shut myself in with those who mean the most to me and smile contentedly about how much love surrounds me. And yet, today's first reading reminds me of how much more overwhelming the thought is of living in the house of the Lord. Our Psalm points out a similar theme in that, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come." We have reason to eagerly await our invitation into Heaven: rich foods, choice wines...I mean, Jesus throws a heck of a Christmas party! The Apostles, popes, archangels, the Blessed Virgin Mary; it's a pretty great guest list to be on!

Meditating on the joy of living in the house of the Lord puts my heart in a beautiful state of peace and excited anticipation. However, sometimes I get homesick for Heaven and ignore the reality in which I live now. That love which we anticipate enjoying fully in Eternity is the same love which we must share with God's people on earth.

Someone had to give up his/her dinner in order for Jesus to perform his miracle in today's Gospel reading. Sure, Jesus did the heavy lifting when it came to multiplying the seven loaves and a few fish, but someone donated that food. Similarly, Jesus only performed the miracle, he did not walk around physically feeding the crowd, other hands served in that way. Jesus "needed" the service of those around him in order to fully bless the crowd that day.

In what ways is God calling each of us to be his hands and feet? Significant tithing is a new phenomenon for me. For the first time in my life, I am making a real paycheck and I am recognizing the call to utilize a portion in service to God. And yet, as a severely indebted medical resident, my financial resources are limited. But how many people in today's Gospel actually served Jesus financially? Only a few. The vast majority served by organizing, spreading the food and cleaning up the leftovers. Could I donate some of my time? Might I carry some granola bars and a few inexpensive winter hats to keep in my car to offer to the homeless guy I pass on my way to the hospital each morning? How about simply going out of my way to offer a word of encouragement to a downtrodden neighbor? In spite of my newfound ability to donate financially, the Gospel is calling me to a well-rounded service approach.

Together let us meditate on the anticipated joy of our invitation into Jesus' Heavenly party. Then let's apply the love we derive from that excitement to acting as our Lord's instruments of service in a multitude of ways during this giving season.

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