

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Oct 5th 2017**

I may be one of the only people to read today's readings and come away with a theme of the importance of enjoying food! Bear with me, please.

In the first reading, Nehemiah goes into great detail about an address by Ezra to the people assembled. Following Ezra's reading of the book of the law of Moses, and the somber, serious mood that created, he tells the people to "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!"

It goes on to say that the people did indeed "eat and drink, to distribute portions, and to celebrate with great joy, for they understood the words that had been expounded to them."

The responsorial psalm, which instructs that "the precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart," also mentions a delicacy, saying that the Lord's precepts, and the joy they should bring us, are "sweeter than syrup or honey from the comb."

And in the Gospel, Jesus instructs his 72 disciples on many things, equipping them for their ministry and mission of taking the good news out to others. In one instruction, he says to "eat and drink what is offered to you."

Perhaps the Lord wants to make sure we understand that we have permission to enjoy food and drink, to celebrate with it, to not feel guilty about indulging when there is a good reason. Dining is of such importance that Jesus even feels it is necessary to tell his disciples to be polite and enjoy the hospitality that is offered them.

The key is, however, to use the food and drink as a means to celebrate the truly important things in life, which are God's love for us, God's care for us and God's precepts for our lives. That's where the real joy is, as the psalmist says, but, as humans, one way we have of showing that joy is celebrating with our friends, families and neighbors with delicious food and drink. And that's a good thing, pleasing to the Lord.

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