



A Free Meal, but with Demands

When God invites you to a meal, you never have to pay. It might be free, but it does have its demands. In fact, you are expected to open yourself to a total transformation. In the first reading, Isaiah mentions the renewal of an everlasting covenant. Perhaps a small dinner fee might be easier to handle.

This reading is quite tender. The needy are invited to a meal of grain, wine, and milk. Their neediness might explain why the meal is free. The invitation is magnanimous: “Come to me...that you may have life” (Isaiah 55:3). The Gospel story of the multiplication of the fishes and loaves reveals the same magnanimity. Jesus feeds all those who have followed him, no questions asked. This story follows a long tradition of miraculous feedings, which include the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) and Elisha multiplying bread (2 Kings 4:42-44). It’s natural to wonder just how that bread and those fish were able to satisfy so many, but there is another aspect of the story that should not be overlooked. The words, “He said the blessing, broke

the loaves, and gave them to the disciples” (Matthew 14:19) will appear again in the account of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26). Though this was the ritual performed at the daily Jewish meal, the eucharistic allusion is unmistakable.

Perhaps it is the psalm response that throws light on the primary focus of the readings. There the graciousness and kindness of the Lord are acclaimed: “You open wide your hand / and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:16).

—Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *Think of the good things in your life that have been given to you free of charge. How grateful are you?*
- ★ *Think of the times God has used you to bless others. How grateful are you for this?*

