

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon text: John 6:56-69
Date Preached: August 23, 2009

Grace to you and peace from God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

There is a Greek word of significance in this text and one that appears frequently in the Gospel of John. That word is meno. It means to abide or remain with.

When people hang out, they abide with one another. Such gatherings may happen at a coffee shop, over ice cream on a hot summer day, or even simply going out for lunch.

Eating together is an aspect of life that is becoming more difficult in our fast-paced world. Oh, I'll have to grab something on the go as I rush off to a meeting, or as we chauffeur our children to sporting events, music concerts or school commitments. However, as I have heard people speak about earlier generations, there was a fondness for family meals. Meal time was meno time. It serves as a time to be together.

One of the ways in which we abide with one another is around food. Here at St. Paul's we gather together at Salad bars. Those in the Confirmation ministry of our church eat together prior to our study sessions.

Such time for eating is an important time because of the conversation that takes place.

Such conversations may not necessarily be world changing. However, eating together does serve to establish a bond. It is a time of conversation, of learning and listening that can lay the foundations for trust and caring friendships.

Each time we get together for a meal we do so in thanksgiving, particularly in the life of the church. On Maundy Thursday we come together for two meals; the first is a covered dish to satisfy the hunger of our flesh. The second is the meal of Holy Communion. In this meal we not only eat with each other, we are served by the host with the very body and blood of the host, Jesus Christ.

Jesus makes it a point to be together with us, drawing us to himself. “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.” When we gather receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we gather with Christ. He is present. He commits himself to be with us in love and by his promise.

This meal binds us to Christ while at the same time bidding us to remain with each other. This Holy

Communion is for you, and for the person sitting next to you and behind you.

But it doesn't end here. Christ doesn't say that after we've said the "Go in peace" that he will not be with us. Rather, he sends us out, being the body of Christ to the world. This means abiding with one another.

Throughout the past two weeks we've reflected on what it means to be the Body of Christ in relationship to issues of poverty. We've become more aware of the ministries of the ONE campaign and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

Today you have an insert in your bulletin regarding "Bread for the World". A strong aspect of Bread for the World's ministry is emphasis on advocacy, particularly through political channels.

Such advocacy is one way in which we as the Body of Christ men or remain with those in need. What we are advocating for is the daily bread needed for life in this world. Yes, we advocate for the daily bread needed by all. Yet it is food that will perish.

In loving service to our impoverished neighbors, this daily bread opens the door for conversation through which we can share the living bread from heaven.

The living bread from heaven binds us together in a way no other meal can. For only in Jesus can we celebrate a taste of God's heavenly banquet. Only in Jesus, who invites us to this table can we abide not only with him but with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in heaven.

Yes, when we come to this table, Jesus feeds us with the same living bread that sustained our ancestors in faith. Jesus feeds us with the same living bread of hope for the life of the world.

There are times when we may struggle to feel that we belong. Those are struggles of the poor; they are also struggles of the wealthy, and of all people in between.

Christ bids us to abide in him. And as we share a basic need, a human bond like eating, we can discover with each other the grace that God freely bestows on us and upon all his children. We are then encouraged to lift up our voices in prayer, in letters to government officials or in whatever ways our talents lead us to give voice to the voiceless and look to the needs of our neighbors, whom Christ bids us to love.
AMEN.