**Year B – 20th Sunday**

Here we are coming into the last month of summer. This might cause some people to regret that the warm weather is coming to an end shortly. However, the bright side of this time of the year is that fields and gardens are producing great things to eat. Farm stands and farmers markets are popping around the area. They offer the opportunity for all to enjoy the richness that comes from refresh, locally grown, fruits and vegetables, even including broccoli.

In our local community many of us are blessed to have access to these fresh fruits and vegetables. If you don’t have your own garden you are still able to get to either a farm stand or a farmers market. Even if you can’t do that, the local supermarkets advertise that some of their produce is locally grown. Yes, fresh and locally grown always seems to taste better than that imported from wherever.

With all the blessing that we enjoy we should also be mindful of the many people in our local community that, for a variety of reasons, do not have access to fresh and locally grown produce. For many people a combination of lack of resources and location keep them for what we can sometimes take for granted. You just have to look at the center aisle of the Church (You just have to look at the back of the Church) and see our collection for the food pantry to remember that access to good nourishment is not a given for some in our community.

The problem of hunger is not limited to our local community. It is an issue that impacts the entire world. The World Food Program estimates that approximately 800 million, yes million, people around the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy life. That is about one in nine people on earth. There are one in four of the world’s children who have stunted growth from malnutrition. In developing countries that proportion can rise to one in three. Also, 66 million primary school-age children attend school hungry across the developing world.

The lack of healthy nutrition around the world can arise from a variety of causes. Some areas of the world are impacted by natural disasters that can be caused by either floods or droughts. Many parts of the world are impacted by wars that have made people refuges either in their own or neighboring countries, which limits their resources available to obtain food. In other parts of the world people live in extreme poverty that puts the purchase of nutritional and sufficient food beyond their reach.

Yes, here in our community we are generally blessed with the ability to obtain whatever type of food that pleases us and our families.

In our Gospel today Jesus is also talking about food. He describes himself as “the living bread that came down from heaven.” He also goes on to tell the crowds that they have to “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood.” Jesus must have known that this would have been a great shock to the people in the crowd. Eating some ones flesh would have been cannibalism and something that might be done by pagans, but not a faithful Jew. The same goes for drinking blood, which is prohibited by Jewish ritual food laws.

What could Jesus have wanted to convey to the crowd with these statements that seem pretty far from what the people could accept?

One very obvious connection that can be made is with the idea of Eucharist. We, as Catholics, believe that in the Eucharist that Jesus is truly present under the forms of bread and wine. This is called transubstantiation, and I am not going to begin to try giving an explanation of how this comes about. If you want to have a deeper understanding of this concept you can consult the Catholic Catechism. We know that Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper with his disciples on the evening before his suffering and death on the cross. The Gospel we are looking at today occurs in John’s Gospel several chapters before the Last Supper. So is there something else that Jesus is telling the crowd about?

Another explanation would come from the words that Jesus uses and how they could be understood by a crowd of faithful Jews. In using the words “my flesh” and “my blood” Jesus is describing his entirety as a person. His “flesh” represented his physical body, and his “blood” represented the life force that comes from God. It was the Jewish belief that one’s blood carried the life you received from God. That was one reason why Jews were prohibited from using blood from animals in cooking. However, Jesus’ “flesh” and his “blood” represented everything that he was as a person, both human and divine, and he was saying that we have to accept him in his entirety.

What does it mean to accept Jesus in his entirety? When we are Baptized we become members of the Church community and are baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection. Just as Jesus is the Son of God we have now become children of God by adoption. We are now sisters and brothers of Jesus. An overused phrase you hear from some that are born again, “having a personal relationship with Jesus,” can be used to describe our becoming children of God. Once we have been baptized and accept our adoption, then we have a responsibility to act as Jesus in the world. Recall the saying that Jesus has no hands but ours and no feet but ours.

How does being Jesus’ hands and feet have anything to do with the hunger of 800 million people around the world. Just as we are fed by Jesus here at the Eucharistic table and are strengthened by the sacred meal, so we must be Jesus to the world and work to feed them.

How is it possible for us to meet the hunger needs of 800 million people around the world? Jesus himself provides the answer, for humans it is impossible but not for God! God created the world and gave to us humans’ responsibility over everything. Taking seriously our brotherhood with Jesus we have to find ways to reach out to those in need, and each of us has to decide for themselves how they can take part. Someone might choose to provide food for a local food pantry. Another might work with the poor to assist them in learning how they themselves can obtain the food they need. You might choose to work with the government to obtain resources both locally, nationally and internationally to help those in need. No matter what avenue you pursue in helping the hungry obtain the food they need, the minimum that all of us are required, yes I did say required, to do is pray to God for the needs of the hungry.

Remember, Jesus feds us with his body and blood. We become what we eat, Jesus. And, nothing is impossible for God.