



Feeling Full

March 18, 2024

Rachel Yates

My husband and I recently took our grandchildren out for dinner. My 5-year old grandson ate a good portion of pasta, broccoli, and garlic bread, before declaring, “My tummy is full of real food.” He paused, before completing his thought, “But my tummy is not full of treats.” He’d kept just enough space for something sweet, and we gladly accommodated that need!

You know I love a good metaphor. The Spirit often speaks to me through the everyday and the ordinary. So, this Lenten season, I’ve been pondering my grandson’s remark. On the one hand, I wonder whether I am full of real spiritual food or the empty calories of the world’s tempting desserts. I remember the Samaritan woman at the well, who heard Jesus’ promise of living water that would quench her thirst forever. *“Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’”* (John 4, NRSVUE) The bread of Jesus’ body; the cup of salvation; living water: all promise spiritual food that is real and satisfying. During Lent, when we sometimes practice fasting (from food, but as well from habits and bad practices), we remind ourselves that what the world offers is often fleeting. Like empty calories, the desserts look enticing, but only satisfy for the moment.

The metaphor, however, can be easily flipped when I’m honest about the source of most of my metaphorical food. When I am primarily filled with meetings and obligations and promises and expectations and paychecks, I can easily declare myself full. Too full to eat another bit. Too full to squeeze in one more thing. In those spaces where we fill up with all that society demands of us – even when the demands come from the people we love dearly – we can announce that we are FULL.

It takes the openness of a 5-year old to recognize that something is missing...that there is a part of us that is left hungry. On our Lenten journey, through the practice of prayer, we make room for the Spirit to arouse our hunger for the sweetness of life in Christ. We will again feel depleted if we only stuff ourselves with what the world has to offer. With joy, we save room for dessert, the sweet, sweet Spirit of the Lord.

So, it can go either way, and I can’t discern which metaphor rings truer. On any given day, it switches.

Perhaps that is the very nature of Lent.

Perhaps we must walk toward Jerusalem feeling hungry, but not sure what we’re missing. Perhaps our hunger will not be sated until the tomb is empty, and we can announce again that Christ is risen.

May you find that for which you are hungering this Lenten season.