Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 30, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“They all ate and were satisfied” (Matthew 15:37).

Is 25:6-10a; Matt 15: 29-37

Today’s first reading from Isaiah describes the eschatological banquet at the end of history when all the nations of the earth will be invited to God’s Mountain to dine with the Chosen People. A favorite reading at funerals, Isaiah 25 promises that the veil of confusion and sadness will be destroyed, and every tear will be wiped away,

for death shall be no more.

The vision of a mountain feast was the dream of people for whom ordinary food was uncertain. A desert land, unpredictable weather and primitive farming methods could mean either feast or famine. Add to this the colonial practices of invading nations to extract resources for export while holding captive peoples at subsistence diets to keep them weak, making hunger a way of life. A banquet was something only God could promise, and perhaps only in the afterlife.

The multiplication of loaves and fishes in the wilderness represented freedom from want and uncertainty. No wonder in one account that the people tried to make Jesus their king. A self-sufficient and well-fed army had messianic implications for Rome, always anticipating trouble from charismatic leaders.

But for Jesus, the wilderness miracles were more about compassion for the crowds who had followed him beyond their supply lines. He used these occasions to teach his disciples to trust that love always provides if they have faith. The evangelists saw beneath the nationalist fervor to Jesus' prophetic fulfillment of Moses calling down manna in the desert. Theologians after that saw a preview of the Eucharist. Jesus invited everyone to come to him to find satisfaction. "I have come that you might have life, abundant life."

His banquets are always abundant. More fine wine at Cana than anyone could imagine much less consume. Every wilderness feeding had second helpings, baskets of leftovers. God's gifts are always extravagant and overflowing compared to the scarcity humans design into every system, to keep supply below demand and the price high, to trigger desire and competition, because there is never enough. With God there is always enough, more than enough, and all are welcome at the table of God's bounty.

Advertisement