

My Brothers and Sisters,

In the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish introduces Jesus' discourse on the bread of life. Although homilies on this chapter of John's Gospel typically focus on Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist, some Scripture scholars suggest that when Jesus talks about himself as the bread of life, he is not referring simply to the gift of himself in the Eucharist. In at least part of the discourse, since he is the Word, he is referring to his Word as the bread of life.

Our present Eucharist is based on the ancient Jewish synagogue service, which was predominantly a Scripture service, and the early Christian agape meals. Therefore, our Liturgy is divided into two principal parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council picked up on the themes of John 6 and made the point that at the Eucharist, we are fed from two tables: the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist [DV 21].

One of the things we are seeing today is tremendous growth in the evangelical Christian Churches, which are essentially churches of the Word. I would suggest that at least part of their growth can be attributed to people's hunger for God's Word. Today people are hungering to find meaning in their lives, to make sense of their lives.

This struggle to find meaning in life has become more difficult as life has become more fast paced, change has become more rapid, and everything has become more complicated. Already in 1970, Alvin Toffler wrote a book entitled *Future Shock*. According to Toffler, today we are like people running for a train that is already pulling out of the station. This is equally true for children and teenagers. In the early 1980's David Elkind wrote *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon* and *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*.

In the 1982 book *Megatrends*, John Naisbitt suggests this is the basis for the rise of evangelical churches.¹ In turbulent times, people look for structure and answers rather than ambiguity and questions. The problem is that God's Word, the Bible, was never intended to be an answer book for all life's questions and problems. In fact, in the Gospels, Jesus challenges us to learn to read the signs of the times. Also, as a sacramental church, we are a church of mystery, wonder, and awe.

My brothers and sisters, in the Old Testament, when God called Ezekiel [3:1-3], he had him eat the scroll, the words, that God wanted him to proclaim. Father Ron Rolheiser wrote about this passage and similar passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah: "The idea is that they should digest the word and turn it into their own flesh so that people will be able to see the word of God in a living body rather than on a dead parchment."² This suggests that we have to digest God's word and make it our own if we are going to find meaning in our lives and if we are going to fulfill our vocation to witness Christ to others.

¹John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, (New York, Warner Books, Inc., 1982), p. 240.

²Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 102.