

Saint Thomas' and St Thomas' of the Air Church
 Trinity VII
 July 18, 2021
 rmceely+

“nourish us with all goodness”
 “what fruit had ye then in those things whereof you are now ashamed”
 “So they did eat and were filled”

Words from today's Collect, Epistle and Gospel, respectively.

If it occurred to you
 that the church is directing us
 toward nutrition today
 I think you would not be far wrong.
 But perhaps not in the way you might have expected.

Nutrition seems to have captured the airwaves these days.
 We get a seemingly endless stream
 Of advertisements, blogs, podcasts, books, TV talk shows
 Infomercials and magazines
 that profess breakthroughs and new ways to eat
 that will cure almost every ailment
 and problem known to mankind
 From the common cold
 To aging, weight gain and weight loss
 To disease
 To our mortality

It seems as though every week
 some new clinical study has been completed
 touting the medicinal benefits of some miracle food.
 Some nutritional prevention of death itself.

While it is not my purpose today to denigrate nutritional science,
 I point out the great extent that we go to for our physical
 health.

But ask; “what measures do we take for our spiritual health?”

Jesus’ feeding miracles show us a number of important things.

He first cared for the Jews in the feeding of the 5,000

And then demonstrated that

He came for the salvation of the Gentiles and for all people,
in the feeding of the 4,000.

He gave them and us a preview of the Communion

That Close union with God

In the feeding miracles.

When He took

Gave thanks

Broke the bread

And gave it to His disciples to administer to the people.

On the surface, we see His compassion for the people

Who had traveled long and far to hear Him.

He satisfied their physical need

And filled their stomachs. Yes

But under the surface there was more.

Jesus fed their souls

With the miracle that took place right before their eyes

Right as the basket was passed to their hand

And the bread miraculously multiplied

It was tangible and undeniable evidence that

Jesus was everything He said He was.

You could believe all that He said

You could trust Him.

Put your faith in Him

Open your heart and soul to Him.

You could let the love of God pour into your soul

let the love of God nourish your soul.

A year later, in that Upper Room on the night in which He was betrayed

He repeated the miracle

But this time with an eternal twist:

He took bread

And when He had given thanks

He brake it

And gave it to His disciples again

But this time He said

This is my body

Do this in re-membrance of Me.

This time the miracle again took place in their hand

And right before their eyes

But this time

He became the bread

This time

The miracle was perpetual

This time

He did not fill their stomachs

He filled their hearts and souls

This time

He opened the door to the pathway

That led from mankind to God.

This time

He poured loving nutrition

into the soul of mankind.

St Paul develops the argument he made last week in today's Epistle.

Last week, you no doubt recall,

Paul asserted that we become new people

in our baptism

and in the sacrament of absolution

With the forgiveness of our sins.

He analogized the immersion of baptism
 As we rise from the waters,
 free from sin and are as if we were born again
 Newly created beings, like newborn babes.
 Without a spot of sin.

This week, in the verses that actually follow those of last week
 Paul says; before we were slaves to sin
 Now we are new persons of God,
 He asks, ‘What fruit did we have when we were slaves to sin
 That we are not ashamed of now?’

Was there any beneficial nutrition
 Imparted by our sinful behaviour?
 Was there any benefit to our souls, our bodies or our hearts
 Imparted by our sins?
 I can’t think of any in my case.

Paul points out; now that we are servants or slaves of God
 The fruit, benefit or nourishment of our souls
 Is holiness and righteousness
 And the inevitable fruit of that kind of life in this world
 Is eternal life in the next.

He sums up:
 For the wage of sin is death
 But the gift of God
 Is eternal life
 Through Jesus Christ.

So if we are to care for the health of our souls
 What should we feed it?
 to nourish
 and improve it in this life?

And what is it that we should avoid,
for our soul's health
in this life
To help assure eternal life with God?

Part of the answer you are fulfilling right now.
You are here
In this Holy House of God
This little oasis of worship
In a desert of emptiness
Miraculously located on the street named for
His sacrament.

We are here
In worship
In fulfillment of Our Lord's
Command and advice
To pray, To love God
To love each other as Christ loves you.

We are here
And in a few moments
Will spiritually receive the sacrament
That Jesus commanded
The Holy Eucharist
The Body and Blood of Christ
That feeds our souls
That washes our souls
With His most precious blood

We are here to join with Him
In the eternal sacrifice
When we join our sacrifice and oblation
With His
In the eternal communion: that close union with God

Most of us have been joined with Him
 In that other sacrament
 That Jesus commanded:
 Our baptism
 We are here to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest
 His holy word
 The scripture of His inspired word
 The owner's manual of our lives.
 For the care and feeding of our souls

In the world outside these doors
 We find another kind of nutrition for our souls
 The opportunity by the way we live our lives
 To be a witness of God's love
 In a time when most others don't
 We have an opportunity to demonstrate
 The meaning and value of a life with Christ
 Each time we offer a prayer for each other
 For the stranger in need
 For the person who seems not to know the love of Christ
 Each time you take time
 and make an effort
 for another creature of God
 Each time you do God's will
 You do God's work
 And without intending to do so
 You feed your soul.

In Cranmer's prayer this morning , the Collect, we pray:
 "Nourish us with all goodness"

Now, if those are some of the things that feed our souls
 What, for our soul's nutrition, should we avoid?
 For our soul's health
 What must we not come near?

Just as there are foods that are detrimental to the health of our bodies

Poisons

Excesses

Food that is detrimental to our body's health

There are elements of our lives that are detrimental to the health of our souls

That we must also avoid.

In our ever-growing cosmopolitan society we must recognize that

The evil one is at work every day

Working to bathe us in evil

With crime

With pride

With ingratitude

With rudeness

With selfishness

With lust

With hate

With prejudice

I used to think these things did not effect me directly

That they were benign.

But I have changed my mind about that.

I now firmly believe

That the evil in our world

Is dangerous to our soul's health

The works of the devil in our lives

Can pollute our souls every time it touches us.

Every time we encounter the works of evil

It leaves a harmful scar upon our soul.

People who work in law enforcement

Something I know only a little

Seem to have to resist

Becoming like the people from which it is their job to separate us

It is as if the evil rubs off or is contagious

The sin in our lives

Principally our own sin
But to a lesser degree the sin of others
Is like a tarnish
That weakens
And prevents the light of God from shining
Upon
And through us.
From us back out into the world.

The things that seem little and trivial

Have a cumulative effect
And are harmful to our soul's health

We have become accustomed to the nudity

And lascivious behavior
From Hollywood
From much of the entertainment industry
From the media

We are bombarded with advertising

That contains immoral content
And we think we are unaffected by it
But with each sensory attack
Our souls are harmed
In a very small way

The worst part is that we have become numb to them

Even accepting them as just a part of life
Assuming their character is benign
or worse,
harmless.

But I have come to believe that each assault

Leaves behind a tiny spot of tarnish on our souls

If you stop to consider the number of times we are assaulted each day

I think we would be shocked at the cumulative effect.

I know that in today's world this sounds "prudish"

Is that because

The evil one wants us to ignore it?

I encourage you only to consider the proposition

And judge for yourself

And for your own soul

The degree to which you are harmed.

The antidote for all this is, of course

The sacraments

Communion, which washes our souls

Feeds our souls

Absolution, which removes the tarnish

And allows the light of God to shine

It is prayer

It is being here

It is the word of God.

It is the love of God

Our love of God and for each other

In short all the things that nourish our souls

Are the same things

that defeat the impacts of the evil upon our souls.

In Cranmer's Collect for today we pray:

"And of thy great mercy

Keep us in the same" (in all goodness)

So if those are among the things we must do and not do for our soul's health,

What is left?

We must be among the 4000
Following Christ in this wilderness
Hearing His words
Feeling His thoughts
Loving God as He loves us
Loving our neighbor in Christian Love
Being nourished
We must sit down in this place as they did
In this Holy House of God
And nourish our souls
With the sacraments
With prayer
With the love of God
And with the Christian love we share among ourselves.

You know, the only thing we take from this world
into the next
Is our soul.
So, the health of our souls is important.

Our souls are challenged in this world.
They are under attack
They need to be cleansed from time to time.
Our souls need to be nourished
The question this morning is:
Are we doing all
That we should
To care for and nourish
Our immortal souls?

