

Our daily bread: Finding nourishment in Our Faith

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.' " ~ John 6:35

I grew up on a farm – an organic farm to be exact. My mom made our clothes, grew much of our food, canned for the winter and even ground the wheat for the bread she baked. All my childhood, I yearned for store-bought clothes and store-bought bread. But, now, as a mother of three who bakes the occasional loaf, the smell of fresh baked bread is the smell of home, comfort, safety and love. As the aroma fills my home, I am reminded of my hardworking, loving mother and my loud-laughing, generous farmer father who grew the wheat we ate in our bread.

Bread has, through the centuries, been a critical staple in diets around the world. It can be made from many different grains, not just wheat, and can take many forms – from our American sliced loaves to crusty French baguettes and chewy Middle Eastern flatbreads. It has been used as currency and has saved lives. The story of God bringing manna to the Israelites in the desert is one many of us learn as children.

Perhaps this is why when Jesus declares himself in the Gospel of John to be "the bread of life" I simply nod in agreement. Is there any better metaphor for who Jesus is for us? Just as my mother worked the dough in her hands, Jesus works in my life every day, his love touching me through the acts of kind strangers and thoughtful friends. His forgiveness waits for me expectantly, like dough rising in the warmth of a sunny window. And, like a thick slice of warm bread, I draw comfort and nourishment from my relationship with Christ. I am grateful to encounter his true presence in the Eucharist at

each Mass.

As we near Easter, we are reminded that “breaking bread” is a common way we express the act of eating a meal together. When we bless our food in prayer and then pass the breadbasket, our actions strengthen our bond to our friends and family. Jesus broke bread with his disciples on their last evening together, sharing bread and wine – his body and blood – and forming a bond between them as disciples. We remember this meal and Christ’s sacrifice and celebrate it with our friends every week when we go to Mass. We do it in memory of him.

If you’ve never baked a loaf of bread, I encourage you to do so. It is a labor of love. Take the time to measure and combine the flour, oil, sugar, water and yeast. Feel the silky dough in your hands as you knead it. Peek under the cloth as it rises in a warm spot. Breathe in the earthy smell as it bakes and, best of all, watch as your family tastes the toasty warmth of their first slice. After all these years, I still find great satisfaction when my kids burst through the door after school and exclaim: “Oh, Mom! It smells amazing in here. Are you baking bread?”

Yes, my love, I am. Amen.