



## The Word...

Elisha insisted, "Give it to the people to eat."  
For thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and there shall be some left over.'  
And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.  
*(from 2 Kgs 4:42-44)*

When they had had their fill, (Jesus) said to his disciples,  
"Gather the fragments left over so that nothing will be wasted."  
So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments.  
*(from Jn 6:1-15)*

## Pondering the Word ...

Leftovers.

That word can prompt a few different reactions. For some, it indicates what is not needed or superfluous -- the "throw-aways." Others might find comfort in the word as it applies to food: what was nourishing and delicious the night before will be available again tonight. (When my kids were young, my daughter used to employ what she called "defensive eating" since if there were any leftovers to be had, they would surely be gone by morning, victims of late-night frig raiding by her father and brother!)

Of course, the leftovers in these two stories are a sign of the bounty of God who provides all we need and then some. But I like to think that Elisha and his servant and Jesus and his disciples are the ones who eat the fragments, not because they are skeptical so wait to see if there will be enough, but to show to the crowds what it means to be servant leaders.

How often have the poor been recipients of my leftovers! How often have I taken the best and left the rest, the scraps to those the world considers "throw-aways?" How often am I willing to wait for the fragments rather than moving to the front of the line?

## Living the Word ...

Years ago, when participating in a Christmas collection at my son's high school, I came across a donation of very nice used clothes. Designer labels, hardly ever worn. I was about to wrap them up, but checked with the Christian service minister first. He took them and said he would save them for another time. "At Christmas," he said, "everyone deserves new." Those words stuck with me: "Everyone deserves new."

In an ideal world, all would be welcome at the table at the same time. No one would be excluded from what is new and fresh and nourishing. But we don't live in an ideal world...far from it. This is not to say we should stop sharing what is extra, but when we do, let's consider this: "Would I give this, would I serve this to my family?" Give to others as you would want to be given to.

## Personal Reflections and Ideas ... \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mon, Jul 26:** *So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Ah, this people has indeed committed a grave sin... If you would only forgive their sin! If you will not, then strike me out of the book that you have written."* (Ex 32:15-24, 30-34) Think about what Moses says here. How different from what we hear from some leaders today, all too ready to drop a person or constituency that no longer serves their purpose! Moses has been a faithful servant. He has done nothing wrong and yet he's willing to take the fall with the Israelites, a people God sent him to in the first place. He has cast his lot with them. **Today's reflection:** *Note that Moses does not condone or excuse the Israelites' idolatry; they feel the brunt of his anger! But he stays. Reflect on a time that challenged you to stay. Maybe it was with someone facing a loss of reputation, someone who had fallen out of favor.* **Provision:** *None of us want to be defined by the worst thing we have ever done. Is there someone you know who might benefit today from your support and encouragement in the face of a sinful or difficult situation?*

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**Tue, Jul 27:** *"...the field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom. The weeds are the children of the Evil One, and the enemy who sows them is the Devil."* (Mt 13:36-43)

One can read an "either/or" dichotomy in Jesus' parable explanation that doesn't jibe with our real experiences of others, or for that matter, of ourselves. I have yet to encounter anyone who is all good, nor someone who is pure evil. To mix metaphors, as the Native American folktale says, good and evil are like two wolves battling continuously for our hearts. Which one wins? The one we feed. **Today's reflection:** *You might be taking care of your physical heart, but what about your spiritual heart and soul? Are you feeding and nurturing the good inside? Are you paying attention so that other things are not being fed without you realizing?* **Provision:** *The news "feed" can be a source of negativity for me. If it is for you, take a break. Look for things that feed goodness today.*

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**Wed, Jul 28:** *"The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."* (Mt 13:44-46)

What does this guy do once he has bought the field? He's kind of sneaky at the outset, trying to keep the treasure all to himself. He has found something precious and wants to make sure no one takes it from him. Finding the freedom and the fire that faith offers might bring about a similar reaction in us. We want to hide somewhere to enjoy our newfound closeness with the Lord. We might be afraid that if we invite others in, it will somehow diminish what we have. But the beauty of true faith, manifest in love, is that it is never about division. Faith and love only multiplies! **Today's reflection:** *What is the treasure of faith you have found? Are you ever hesitant to share it?* **Provision:** *Share something of your faith today. Let the Spirit multiply your treasure.*

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**Thu, Jul 29:** *"I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* (Jn 11:19-27)

**Today's reflection:** *What is your answer?* **Provision:** *Become aware of the role your answer plays in your daily life.*

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**Fri, Jul 30:** *"There shall be no strange god among you nor shall you worship any alien god."* (Ps 81)

This psalm verse echoes the first commandment, a not-so-subtle reminder of the golden calf and of all the times the Jews succumbed to the idols of their neighbors. The word "among" strikes me. Unless we are cloistered, most of us are exposed to lots of "strange gods" as we go about our day. Things that can easily become idols are everywhere among us -- TVs, smart phones, computers. **Today's reflection:** *The conveniences of technology can be used for such good, but be aware of when we allow them to feed us falsehoods and false hopes. Reflect today on what occupies your time, thoughts, and feelings during the day. Do your daily activities lead you to or away from God?* **Provision:** *Be especially aware of God's presence as you go about your day.*

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**Sat, Jul 31:** *"Do not deal unfairly, then; but stand in fear of your God. I, the LORD, am your God."* (Lv 25:1, 8-17)

This passage is about a "jubilee year," an every-50<sup>th</sup>-year celebration when business transactions of the past are recast so that all is fair and equitable among the children of Israel. A time to rectify and resolve inequities so that jealousy and conflicts are not allowed to fester. In light of the ever-growing divide between the "haves" and "have nots" in our world, perhaps such a reckoning would be a good thing for us as well! **Today's Reflection:** *So go ahead—you have my permission to read the news today! 😊 Read it and reflect on where you see inequity (and iniquity!) **Provision:** Look around. Where do you see unfairness in your life? Be creative. Think about things you can do to create a more just, fairer world. (Celebrate St. Ignatius feast day today—do an examen!)*