

**20th Sunday of the Year (B)**

**August 19, 2018**

**Proverbs 9:1-6  
Ephesians 5:15-20  
John 6:51-58**

**In my work with the veterans the past few weeks, I have been focused upon how the brain is impacted by traumatic events. I was emphasizing the difference between automatic thinking and living in awareness. I was surprised and taken aback when one veteran said that he was way too aware of his racing thoughts, his anger and frustration, his anxiety. He found his problem as being too aware, and he wanted to shut it all down. Taken by surprise, I affirmed his struggle, and then I had to regroup for a moment. I invited this veteran to turn to the board where there was a diagram, highlighting the “noticing brain.” I had introduced this concept but it needed further explanation. This part of the brain wants us to actually get out of our heads and more into the rest of the body, noticing with “curiosity” rather than “judgment.” Judgment skims across the surface of feelings and sensations and closes the door, while curiosity keeps the door open ready to ask questions, wanting to know more.**

**This is my introduction to the sacred word today where we are invited to be curious. For me and for many of us gathered, we have been doing Sunday Mass for many years, in my case since I was seven years old. This ritual is pretty familiar even though it changed many years ago from Latin to English, we adjusted and settled in and continued to make this a part of the Sunday routine. Seemingly, it works for us, we gather, we pray, and some times we even celebrate.**

**Today, it is so easy to get a meal. We don’t even have to “waste” time shopping and preparing. All we have to do is stop at a fast food place. We don’t even need to go in. Just stay in the car, drive through, and for a few dollars, food is handed to us. On the other hand, things are quite different when we are invited to a banquet. We may not have to prepare the food, but we certainly want to prepare ourselves. We may put on our best clothes, maybe something new, for a banquet is an event.**

**When we are invited to a banquet, we seldom ask about the menu. If it is a genuine banquet, we know the food will be of high quality and expertly prepared. Besides, the point is not the quality of the food served, but the significance of the event, the host and any honored guests.**

**In our opening lesson, Wisdom spreads out a banquet to which we all are invited. The meat and the wine that she offers is insight and understanding, and we would truly be foolish to turn down the invitation. We would actually be more than fools, we would be rejecting life itself. Unfortunately, at times we prefer the fast food to the banquet. We would rather stay comfortably in the car than have to go to all the trouble of being curious. We are satisfied with our routine, automatic thinking and ways of being from day to day. Most often our veterans struggling to recover are not satisfied with what they have been**

enduring, yet they do not know how to make a change. All too often we fall into that same pattern, and we get stuck with our Sunday routine.

Lady Wisdom in that first lesson directs us to the gospel where, this Sunday, we continue to ponder the “bread of life.” The central image in this teaching is eating. Eating is an act of assimilation, an intimate act by which a part of the world becomes a part of us. We are not separate from the world, rather we are physically constituted by the world. Jesus takes this all too familiar dynamic of eating and uses it for his spiritual purposes. As we eat bread and it becomes a part of us, so we are invited to integrate the consciousness of Jesus and make it our own. Most often our eating and drinking are so much a part of our daily lives, that we seldom are mindful of what we are doing. Here Jesus is inviting us to be curious, so that life of Jesus might become available to us. One spiritual teacher put it this way, “When we eat material food, it becomes us. When we eat spiritual food, we become it.”

My suggestion today is that we remain curious about Lady Wisdom and the bread of life Jesus offers us. With curiosity the door remains open to look more deeply into the mystery, life that will never end. As we feed on the sacred word and Eucharist, we trust we will have all that we need to face this new week.