

Wanting What We Don't Have

Kkosrov Andzevatsi, the 10th century Armenian theologian and father of Gregory of Narek said, "As we sinned and became mortal by food, Christ's sufferings allowed us to receive atonement and immortality by food." Andzevatsi is making a nice parallel of the "bookends" of salvation history; that Adam-the old man-sinned by eating forbidden fruit, while Christ-the new man-removes sin by offering His self to us in Holy Communion. Put another way, Adam fell sick by food, where Christ offers healing through food. As we put it our Sunday Badarak, Holy Communion is our weekly "medicine for forgiveness of sin/դէղ թողութեան մեղաց."

With all this talk about food, it might be hard to distinguish this church from a restaurant. Indeed there are a few late comers who perhaps do think this church is a restaurant! But of course there is something more at play in the matter of spiritual health than material food. And it was not from eating badly that evil came into the world-or comes into it today. Evil has always come from desiring what we don't have. Adam desired the only thing he didn't have, the forbidden fruit. He desired to be the only thing he wasn't, God.

The evil one-to this very day-whispers in our ear, reminding us of what we don't have and what we are not. You aren't safe and secure. You aren't in control of your life now that you are older. You aren't as good at work as your co-worker. You don't get the respect you deserve. Your house isn't as nice as your neighbor's. You aren't as pretty as she is. Your kids don't listen like their kids...

The word for evil in Armenian is "չար/*char*." "Ch" means "not" and "ar" means "to make, to create." The Armenian word reminds us that evil, at its dark core, always preys on what we don't make, don't have, what we aren't. In today's passage from Matthew 14, it is just this evil which threatens the disciples, who have become fixated on what they don't have.

Let's recall the story. Jesus and his disciples had been teaching a crowd of followers well into the evening, such that they hadn't eaten all day. When they finally thought of food, it was evening and there were only five loaves of bread and two fish available to feed 5000 people. Jesus says to them, well go ahead and feed them. His disciples replied incredulously, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' Jesus responds; **'Bring them here to me.'**

'Bring them here to me.' The beginning of faith for the disciples is bringing to God what they do have, and forgetting their fixation on what they don't. That's how faith also begins for us. 'Bring them here to me.' Bring yourself to Christ at the altar, to a piece of bread and wine that is His promise to fill and fulfill us. Bring yourself with all the real and imagined things you don't have and confess them before God. It is no coincidence that each of the sins we say in confession- pride, envy and lust-are all sicknesses, lies about what we don't have. Pride preys on a lack of self, envy and lust prey on a lack of something or someone.

But we confess these sins in the presence of God and each other, thereby exposing these lies for what they are. We have so many gifts for which we can be thankful. And if we have God, we have everything we need; everything in the entire world! And so we come before God today and every Sunday bringing to him just what we have, and asking him to bless it. Every Sunday we recall what our Lord did on that day, when he took five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves. He then gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to all those who followed him, who gave them to us. And all ate and were truly filled by Him; now and always and unto the ages of ages amen.