

“Bread for the Little Guys”—Matthew 19:13-15

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.

One Sunday morning while Holy Communion was being served, a little boy came to the chancel rail to kneel and receive the Lord’s Supper. The only space he could find, however, was between two rather large persons. As the minister passed with the bread, he didn’t see the little boy, wedged as he was between these two large persons, and so the minister simply passed him by. The minister had served a few people down the rail when he heard a plaintive cry from the little boy, who said, “Hey, Jesus, don’t you have any bread for us little guys?”

Well, little boy, the answer is “Yes!”—Jesus does have bread for the little guys. Jesus has bread for the little guys, the big guys, and all the guys in between. And it’s not just the bread of Holy Communion that Jesus has—it’s the bread of heaven, the stuff that gives true life, real life, eternal life: it’s Jesus himself. Yes, Jesus has bread for the little guys and the big guys and all the guys in between—Jesus has bread for everyone!

Now, there are some who will say that children don’t belong at the Table of the Lord, because they don’t understand what’s going on here—they don’t understand the meaning and significance of the Sacrament. I had a three-year running discussion with a member in another church, a man who grew up in another Christian tradition, who felt exactly this way—children didn’t belong at the Communion Table, because they couldn’t understand what was happening. Many times during this three-year discussion I wanted ask him, “Well, can *you* tell me exactly what happens in Holy Communion?” I chose instead to say, “Well, *I* don’t understand everything that happens in Holy Communion. I haven’t yet grasped completely the depths of this holy mystery. Does that mean I can’t come to The Lord’s Table?” That usually stopped the discussion, at least for the moment.

But here’s the truth—our access to The Lord’s Table doesn’t depend on us. It doesn’t depend on our understanding, because we can’t grasp completely its meaning and significance. It doesn’t depend on our own goodness, our own worthiness, because in and of ourselves we’re not good enough or worthy of coming to The Lord’s Table. And it’s not up to anyone to decide who can or can’t come to the Table—because this Sacrament is not our doing; it’s God’s. It’s God who gathers us together as his family for this sacred meal; it’s God who provides the elements, the bread and the cup, from the bounty of his creation; it’s God who provides the Holy Spirit that brings whatever grace we need from him into our

lives; and above all, it's God who provides the One whose sacrifice we celebrate as we gather around the Table, the One whose broken Body and shed Blood are represented in the bread and the cup, Jesus our Savior.

It's God who provides this Sacrament, not us. That's why we talk (or at least should talk) about *receiving* the Sacrament rather than *taking* it—this is God's *gift*, and we can't *take* it; we can only *receive* it. And because *God* is the provider, not us, *we* can't say that anyone is not welcome, and that includes the children.

But let's think of this another way: How many of us would keep our children from a meal? When we sit down to the table, how many of us would tell our children, "No, you're not allowed to eat"? None of us would, of course—we know our children need to be fed. We know as well that all of our children—the children for whom we as the church are responsible—need to be fed spiritually, and it's up to *all* of us to give *all* our children the chance to taste and see that the Lord is good. It's up to *all* of us to see that *all* our children have the chance to eat the bread of heaven and drink the water of life. It's up to *all* of us to give *all* our children every chance to know Jesus, our Lord and Savior. The Lord's Table is for the children as much as anybody.

So Jesus has bread for the little guys and the big guys and all the guys in between—Jesus has bread for the children and the youth and the adults as well. But it's up to us, not just to make sure we're not keeping them from the Table, but that we're giving them every chance to share in our family meal, the bread and the cup, the Body and Blood of our Savior. Will you help Jesus bring bread to the little guys?

Dear God, make it so for all of us!