



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

William J. Byron, S.J.

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

RCL: Genesis 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19; Psalm 46; Romans 1:16-17; 3:22b-28 (29-31); Matthew 7:21-29; LM: Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28; Psalm 31:2-3, 3-4, 17, 25; Romans 3:21-25, 28; Matthew 7:21-27

Anyone concerned with the problem of world hunger will make special note of the Lord's instruction to Noah to "take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them" (Gen 6:21). The "them" in this case includes Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and two "of every living thing"—birds, animals, and every creeping thing. Quite a collection and quite a collective appetite for food! Noah gives new meaning to the word "provisioning."

The waters "swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days," we are told, so the provisions had to last at least that long. It was not yet raining when Noah began to build the ark, which reminds us that planning ahead is related to survival. Famine, like flood, will destroy life. Provisioning, in the broadest sense of that word, must begin long before either famine or flood begins to take its toll.

Food reserves—international grain reserves—require both political will and appropriate agricultural technology. Neither, presumably, was much of an issue for Noah, who simply followed orders and built his floating storehouse to the Lord's specified dimensions: three hundred cubits by fifty cubits by thirty cubits. A "cubit," for those who might be wondering, is the length of an adult forearm from elbow to extended middle finger. The precise measurements are unimportant. The point is this: provisioning takes time, space, and serious commitment.

Gathering emergency food aid to avoid starvation is one thing; providing for an abundant future is quite another. The Christian conscience is concerned with both. Future food supplies depend on science, technology, political will, education, and diplomacy, as well as peace within and between nations.

To put a reverent twist on Matthew 7:21ff., "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will have enough to eat. Prayer alone won't do it. Asking and waiting are not enough. Action is necessary. "[O]nly the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" is going to be part of the solution to the problem of world hunger. "Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them" is going to be of genuine assistance to those who are poor and hungry in this world.

According to a saying that used to make the rounds in Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement, "The trouble with the world is that the people who do all the thinking never act, and the people who do all the acting never think." What has been needed since the time of Noah, and what is particularly necessary in the face of worldwide hunger and poverty, is a combination of thought and action powerful enough to deal with huge societal problems. Where faith and



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works combine to shape both thought and action, provisioning strategies for the world's hungry poor people will be "founded on rock," the kind of rock that supports any faith community that wants to help.

Children's Time [LH]

Where do we store food as we plan ahead for future meals? In pantries, freezers, cupboards? Noah stored food so that he and those on board could survive, and we store food so we'll have enough to eat (though probably not 150 days' worth!). In today's world there are times when many people don't have enough to eat for a long time in one place, and so are at risk of dying—we call that a famine. Countries store up food to help when famine hits. We need to make sure that all God's people can be fed.

Musical Suggestions [LH]

How Firm a Foundation—NCH 407

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound—BP 105

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