

## **SCREEN: Prayer Protest photo**

Last Monday I attended a peaceful prayer protest in DC.

Deacon Doyle and his daughter Sara were also there.

Over 200 priests, deacons, religious and lay Catholics from across our region met on the edge of Lafayette Park.

Here's a photo of Bishop Roy Campbell leading us in prayer.

What brought us together?

First and foremost, we wanted to pray for George Floyd, for all victims of injustice and for an end to racism.

Second, we wanted to add our voices to those from towns and cities across *America and our world* calling for change.

At Monday's gathering there was sadness, but also hope.

And if I had to explain in two words what united us, it would be these:

## **SCREEN: hurt and hunger**

Hurt and hunger brought us together in DC

and hurt and hunger are uniting so many others right now.

Let me talk about the hurt first.

The murder of George Floyd was seen by millions of people.

His was just the latest killing of an unarmed African American at the hands of police.

Our nation can no longer ignore what is going on.

Graphically and painfully we see America's original sin: the sin of racism.

And the hurt that it has caused has created hunger for change.

A hunger for the day when people are treated equally regardless of their race - for a day when prejudice and injustice don't dominate the news cycle.

Hurt and hunger, two powerful emotions uniting communities and churches right now.

## **SCREEN: Let's Make A Deal main screen**

Today we're beginning a new message series titled, *Let's Make A Deal*.

What does the title mean?

As a kid I remember watching the TV game show called,  
*'Let's Make A Deal'*.

The premise was fairly simple:

contestants would negotiate with the host to try to find big prizes.

The trick was figuring out where the prize was hidden:

was it behind door #1 or door #2, was it behind the curtain?

Sometimes I'd shout at the TV, "*Pick door #1!*"

At best there was a 50/50 chance of winning.

Now, we're borrowing the title to make the point that

when it comes to faith, God offers humanity the greatest deal of all time.

And it couldn't be easier - there's no trick, nothing is hidden,

and there's no chance of losing.

Accept God's deal and you'll gain a prize beyond your wildest dreams.

And last Sunday we heard what it was:

**SCREEN: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him might not perish  
but might have eternal life. -John 3:16**

So here's what we have to do:

- believe in God
- accept his unconditional love
- and love others unconditionally each day

But if it's that easy - if God loves us and if Christ commands us to love another -

why do we see so much hate in our world right now?

Why is there so much hurt and hunger?

In our first reading, the Israelites were asking the same questions.

After Moses freed them from slavery in Egypt

they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

They'd been promised a land flowing with milk and honey,

instead they were hungry and hurting and asked Moses, *Why?*

Here's what he told them:

**SCREEN: God tested you by affliction to find out whether or not**

**it was your intention to keep his commandments.**

Now, for a lot of people there's something about this answer that just doesn't sit right.

If God loved them so much, why did he test them by afflicting them?

Here's how I explain it.

Think of teachers and coaches

Their role is to lead their students and players to succeed.

That entails helping them overcome bad habits and distractions.

Good leaders know that sometimes failure

can be a powerful and life-changing experience.

So sometimes the teacher or coach allows failure - as painful as it can be - to build up endurance, to instill a sense of drive and determination.

The goal is not to punish or afflict, but to help individuals realize their potential and become the best-versions-of-themselves.

That was God's plan for his Chosen People in the wilderness.

God was forming them, giving them time to grow,

hoping they would hunger more deeply for him and his ways.

It was not an easy process.

They could be stubborn and sinful.

Sometimes they failed.

But God remained faithful and loving.

God never left them to go find a different Chosen People.

God never gave up on them.

And because *they* never gave up,

they discovered that God would feed them in unexpected ways.

They learned that God alone was worthy to be worshipped.

They realized that if they trusted in God, they'd never go hungry again.

And they found life in every word that came forth from the mouth of God.

**SCREEN: I am the living bread that came down from heaven;**

**whoever eats this bread will live forever;**

**and the bread that I will give**

**is my flesh for the life of the world." -John 6: 51**

Fifteen centuries after Moses

God revealed His Son Jesus as the messiah.

In today's Gospel Jesus explained his mission to the crowd.

He said:

*I am the living bread that came down from heaven;*

*whoever eats this bread will live forever;*

*and the bread that I will give*

*is my flesh for the life of the world.*

We've heard this Gospel so often that we don't question it.

Catholics believe Jesus is the living bread.

At Mass we believe that the bread and wine become Jesus's Body and Blood.

But when Jesus first spoke these words, it really confused his disciples -

they couldn't wrap their heads around it.

*Jesus is living bread...what does that mean?*

*How is it possible for us to eat of him?*

But it wasn't any different from the message Moses gave the Israelites.

*God alone can feed you and nourish you.*

*Only God can satisfy your deepest longings and hungers.*

Jesus took it to a deeper level by saying,

*"I'm living bread, I'm the messiah".*

He was saying to all who would follow him:

*To be my disciple, you must believe that*

*I'm the only one who can save you - the only one who can*

*heal your hurts and satisfy your deepest hungers.*

And that's the deal Christ offers us today.

When we choose to follow Jesus - to be his disciple -

when we believe he is the living bread come down from heaven

then we will experience healing and nourishment

and we will discover our purpose in life.

**SCREEN: What is God making you hungry for?**

So let me ask you a question.

If everything going on in our nation right now has made you hurt and hungry,

*'What is God making you hungry for?'*

Is it a hunger for justice, for racial equality?

Are you hungry to help the poor,

to serve the needy, to care for the lonely and the lost?

*What is God making you hungry for?*

*And will you allow Jesus to feed you?*

Choosing to partake of Christ the Living Bread,

means not filling your life with things that can't satisfy

your deepest longings and only leave you feeling empty -

things like power and prestige, possessions and pleasure.

There is a hole in your soul that only Christ can fill.

And it is only when you follow Jesus that you will discover

your true meaning and purpose in life.

Now, to be clear, walking as a disciple of Christ is not an easy journey.

At times it is challenging and painful - it is especially challenging right now.

Last week I ended my message challenging you

to start a conversation with others about the events taking place in our nation.

I told you to see your words and actions like

a pebble dropped in the middle of a pond which can ripple out to others.

And I heard from some of you that those conversations weren't easy.

I had a few myself.

The natural reaction when we experience pushback -

when we feel uncomfortable or afflicted - is to give up.

***We can't give up.***

Our nation is hungry and hurting -

people are counting on us to be strong and courageous.

God needs us to be Christ's living bread in our world right now.

And just like with the Israelites in the wilderness, I believe that

God is allowing us to be afflicted in this time to teach us,

to be more committed to our faith so we can  
make a difference in our world.

**SCREEN: let your hurt feed your hunger for change**

Let your hurt feed your hunger for change.

And isn't that what our worship is about?

At every Mass, the bread and wine are changed into Jesus's Body and Blood.

And that amazing occurrence must change us too.

Partaking of Christ the Living Bread, physically or spiritually,

should make us stronger in faith and love,

and more deeply committed to justice and mercy.

We must advance the peace and salvation of the world.

Every Mass ends with the command to 'go forth' -

to share the Living Bread of Christ with others.

Today, as we celebrate the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ,

let us never forget that God's desire is for us to

become his chosen people in new ways.

May our hurt and our hunger create a space within us

and within our Church which Christ, the Living Bread, can enter and fill.

Amen. +