

I read recently about someone sharing the Lord's Prayer with a young child who said, "But why are we asking for more bread mummy, we get plenty today from the shops." It got me thinking about the simplicity and beauty of the Lord's Prayer and how easy it is to overlook the importance of the familiar. So I am sharing my meditation with you, I hope it gets you pondering more deeply when you eat, make, or share bread at home and when you receive Christ in the Eucharist.

Today when I want bread I do buy it from the shops. In less technological times (and still in some countries) to get bread took a great deal of planning months in advance. First we had to prepare and plough a field, then plant the grain, tend and weed it, then harvest, thresh and grind it into flour. A whole community was involved in the process. Only once it was flour could it be added to other key ingredients, including yeast and then kneaded, rested to rise, knocked down, allowed to rise again, worked with and then finally baked and cooled to be ready for a meal. Wow. That is a quite a big deal. So when we say 'give us today our daily bread' what do you think we are asking God for?

**Ploughing and Lying Fallow:** Firstly the field must be ploughed and prepared for planting. I asked myself: What needs to be ploughed or fertilized in my life so it is ready to receive something new? What weeds and old growth will be uprooted and overturned in the process? How willing am I to give God the freedom to plough up my comfortable patch and turn it back into grubby overturned soil? How long will this process take, and do some things need to rest and lie fallow for a while so they do not destroy the new grain? This made me think of the grief process and letting go of my comfortable old patterns to be willing to stretch into new life. That takes time and it's never easy.

**Seed time:** Then the seed is planted. What dreams, desires and ideas has God placed in my life that is yet to germinate? Is there something I would love to do, but feel too afraid to give it a go for fear of failure? The little seed must die to itself before it can become a part of a field of grain. How can I let God mould my dreams and desires so they align with all that is true, good and beautiful and can become life giving for myself and others? What stops me from this process?

**Harvesting, threshing, stacking and storing:** These are all communal and involve a willingness to join with others and become part of something much bigger than myself. Are there some areas of my life where this analogy is true? Can I readily join in with the church, parish, group, family or community and let myself humbly contribute a small part to the whole without demanding it all go my way? How much do I struggle with being a small part of a whole when I disagree with someone or something, or I don't understand why a particular decision has been made?

**Grinding the grain:** “Ugh” I find myself thinking. “Surely the process should be getting easier”- but it seems not. Now the grain itself is ground into oblivion. When have you felt like you have had to lose a great deal and that really God could have been a bit more gentle and kind? Can you imagine that this could be a grinding moment for you and that there is a future you cannot imagine?

**Adding ingredients and yeast:** Now again the flour must blend with humility into something bigger than itself. The tiny specks of flour are worthless on their own, but together and bound with other good things they can make a treasure. What connections can you see with your own life? What wisdom might Mary and Joseph give us about living with these processes?

**Kneading the Bread:** Now the dough is sticky, soft and malleable in the hands of the baker. How willing am I to be kneaded, shaped and formed by God?

**Rising and knocking down:** This part seems especially tough as an analogy. Having managed all the processes that have gone before and being formed into a beautiful well-formed dough we are left to rise only to be knocked down and asked to rise again, perhaps more than once. What are some connections you might make with the story of Mary and Joseph? When might they have felt built up and then knocked down and how did they respond? Can you see any connections to your own life or to that of communities you are part of?

**Baking and Sharing:** Finally the bread is baked to be shared. Baked bread smells fill the house or bakery and give us such a wonderful sense of anticipation and hope. The baked bread is a thing of beauty in its own right. Then we discover that yet again it must be broken to receive for ourselves and for others. This precious staple food has not been easily produced. In the long journey from ploughing to table, much has happened and there has been enormous change. The thread going through the entire journey is that each change leads us deeper into community, deeper into dying to our own self-interest and deeper into radical trust of the baker. What are some ways the changes, growth, knocks and struggles in your own life can be recognized now as leading you deeper into community, growth in selflessness and deeper into trust of God?

When we next pray the words, “give us this day our daily bread”, I hope we ponder the amazing gift of Christ who comes to us as bread in Eucharist. How he died to himself and was broken on the cross, knocked down to rise again so that we might have the gift of being freely invited to share the bread of life, not only amongst ourselves but for others and yes, for all eternity. I hope we can ponder the connections to the life of Mary and Joseph and finally how we are all invited to live the journey of becoming bread broken for others.

God bless you.