

## **Transcript**

Today's homily will be in three parts. The first one is called The Famine, the second one is The Living Bread and the third one is Saving the World. We begin with

### **The Famine**

As you probably remember, in the country of Ethiopia during the three years of famine, in 1984 to 1986, over one million Ethiopians died of hunger. And during that terrible time, Cardinal Hume of Westminster Cathedral in London made a pastoral visit there. And upon his return to England, he told the following story and these are his words:

"On one occasion, I boarded a helicopter that flew me to a mountain settlement high up in the hills where people were starving and waiting for food, food which perhaps was never to arrive.

"When I stepped out of the helicopter, a little boy of ten ran up to me and took my hand. He wore only a loin cloth around his waist. The whole time I was there, he would not let go of me.

"As we walked around the settlement, he never spoke a word. But whenever we stopped to greet a group of people, he raised his free hand and pointed to his mouth and, with the other, he lifted mine and rubbed it gently up and down his cheek.

"I was terribly moved. Here was an orphan boy, lost and starving, who had managed with two simple gestures to express our deepest hungers, our deepest hungers as human beings, namely our hunger for food and our hunger for love."

"I have never forgotten this incident," continued the Cardinal, "and, to this day, I wonder if that little child is still alive.

"I do remember, however, that as I boarded the helicopter to leave this tragic place, I turned back and looked down and saw the boy standing there, gazing up at me with eyes of sadness and reproach."

### **The Living Bread**



In today's Gospel, Jesus says to the people who come to him hungry...

Hungry for what? Hungry for another miracle, another multiplication of loaves.

Jesus said,

*"I am the living bread that came down from heaven;  
whoever eats this bread will live forever."*

The bread that Jesus will give them is not just food for the body but food for their hearts and food for their souls. This bread brings everlasting life, for he is speaking of the teaching that comes from God Himself.

And more, he is speaking of something much more. It is the gift of his very self. He comes to us and will never leave us. He will be with us always.

At the Last Supper, he says, "Take the bread and break it," saying to his disciples, "Take and eat. This is my body."

"This is my body" means, in the language that he was speaking, "This is me. This is my own self which is to be broken for you." He means his death on the cross.

And then he takes the wine. And the wine which he blesses, he offers and he says these words, "This is my blood which is poured out for each and every one of you." He means he lays his life down for us.

Now, these are the same words that we use whenever we gather together each Sunday. As Jesus himself told us, "Whenever you do these things, do them in remembrance of me."

To take this bread then is to receive Jesus into our lives and into our hearts where he becomes one with us and makes us one with him, uniting us with his Father and sharing with the Father and himself, the Holy Spirit. This is why we call the Eucharist a Holy Communion, a communion of mutual and everlasting love. Finally...

**Saving the World**



Such lovely, lofty words, so full of hope and promise. It's almost enough to help us forget the pain, the pain of the hungry boy, and the shame of the kindly Cardinal, he who would carry with him, all his remaining life, the sad and reproachful look in the little boy's eyes.

No, the Cardinal could not stay, but neither would the Cardinal forget. And wherever he went, he would tell the story of what he himself had witnessed: the famine and the boy who, in the moment of great anguish and distress of his people, reminded the Cardinal of life's terrible truth – without bread and without love, we cannot survive.

Jesus has taken both the bread and his love and made of them the bread and the love of God, truly the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Sacrament.

And when we take of God's bread, we must also remember. We must remember the hunger of the children of the world and how, each day, in our cruel and feckless society, a society of plenty, so many hundreds of them perish.

And if, in our anger, we might be tempted to ask, "Where is God? Where is God? Does He not care?" God, who lives in the cries of His hungry children, responds from their midst and (*inaudible*) recall the words of Jesus, His Son, the words Jesus spoke to Peter on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the words when he said to Peter, "If you really love me, then feed my sheep."