



August 5, 2012

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"God's bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."—John 6:33

Dear Friends;

Elena Segura is the founding director of the Archdiocese of Chicago's *Office for Immigration Affairs and Immigration Education*. Elena was born in Peru.

At the age of 7 while brushing her teeth she looked out the window and saw several small figures winding down the mountain. Later she realized it was her classmates who walked, without shoes, an hour and a half to attend school in town. She realized she had a comfortable home, shoes to run in and only had to walk a few blocks in comfortable shoes.

Her parents were religious people and she questioned them on this inequality. Their answers were not satisfactory. She was told "The church is involved in spiritual things, not in material. It's the job of the government to build roads, and hospitals."

When she was in high school Elena recalled the peasant revolts calling for reforms. The plantation owners became fearful of them. At this point she became involved in the socialist movement in Peru. Some of her friends gave their lives for structural reform, so others could live.

Elena says although she came from a religious family she did not come to know God until 2005. In 2006 she became a Catholic. Elena says,

"I believe that being a Christian is more radical than being a socialist. Why? Because as a Christian I'm called to be transformed daily as an individual and to be connected with society and God's creation in order to bring the reign of God to the world wherever I am. In my opinion, transforming society without transforming myself is not complete. Since I became a Christian I've been learning how Christ invites me daily to be freed from the chains of self-righteousness, the chains of power, the chains of individualism and so many other chains I keep discovering in myself."

Eucharist is extremely important to Elena in this process. She has a daughter with Down syndrome so she has to explain things simply to her daughter. She tells her when they are going to Mass on Sundays that they "are going to the large sanctuary, and when we leave after having received Eucharist, we've become little sanctuaries for all the places we go."

In today's gospel from John the people seek Jesus out because he fed them. In a country where people were very poor that was important. But they missed the bigger picture. In the feeding of the crowd by Jesus, God has given them food. Their deepest hungers and the hungers of the world can be satisfied. It is in their power if they believe. We who have been fed the bread of life are in turn called to feed others, like Jesus.

Pope John Paul II said (*Ecclesia in America* 2000) that in Eucharist Jesus is the host and we are the guests. When we receive Eucharist we become the host. That is why the word "Mass" means "to be sent." We are sent to be host to all people. We feed their hungers and invite them to be nourished with the bread of life come down from heaven. Then they too can become host and nourish others. The reign of God is an invitation to a banquet of unending life. ¡Buen apetito!

Peace,

Fr. Ron