

Alia Aguilar
Youth Sunday Sermon – May 6, 2018
“Chicken Soup for the Soul”

When I was in middle school, I remember having multiple storms causing town wide power outages, which essentially canceled everything, but most importantly for me, school. Although one of these storms ended up canceling Halloween one year and delaying the start of middle school another year, I felt blessed whenever the lights flickered out, as I knew I wouldn't have to do my homework for an entire week!

During this week of no power, eventually I got bored. I ran out of things to do, there was no school to keep me occupied, and usually it wasn't even nice enough to go outside. So, one day I decided to go with my mom to the senior center, where she was going to help out. I didn't know what she was going to do, but I figured I'd go just to pass the time.

When I got there, I learned we were going to be making dinner there: chicken noodle soup. I was excited as that was one of the 3 meals I knew (how to help) to make. My mom's friend and two other girls who were around my age came to help out. We spent hours in the kitchen, making soup and cracking jokes. We all had so much fun, we didn't even notice that it was almost 10 minutes until everyone was to be served.

As I helped serve bowls of soup to people, I noticed that every single person smiled, or said hello to me. Everyone was incredibly friendly. After we finished serving everyone, my mom and I sat down to eat with a table full of people. Even though I was with my mom, I spent the entire time talking with the woman sitting next to me. Even though she was older than I, and you would think we would have nothing to talk about, I barely ate any of my soup because of how much we were talking.

Since then, I've had my share of memorable meals with people. Like, after a hard day on the worksite in Frakes, KY, a close friend and I sat on a bunk bed, ate mac and cheese, and laughed and cried about everything that went wrong that day. Or, back in March at the Young at Heart Brunch that Senior PF hosted, when PF was able to bond with other church members over pancakes and orange juice. Or when I haven't seen one of my friends in a while, and I text them, "Hey, let's go get colony!" and we end up talking for hours about our lives and how much we've both missed over the greasy cheese pizza. Or even just simply sitting down with my family, and spending some time catching up.

When Jesus, back in his day, would invite people to sit at the table and share a meal with him, their race, social/economic status, their past, etc., all of it didn't matter. Everything just floated away, and they sat down and had a meal together. Everything was stripped away and they were left as simply human beings having some food.

We hardly ever notice, as it is such a simple thing, but sharing a meal with someone can create such a strong bond. We all find room to take time out of our busy schedules, put all work aside, and eat a meal with each other. We forget how long it's

been, any conflict in the past/present, everything floats away. For that hour, we don't have to worry about anything else, just making sure the food makes it from the plate, into your mouth. The table is a place of community, where people can come and eat together, as one.

And hey, anyone wanna grab some food with me in Wilton hall after church?

Zachary Gingras
Youth Sunday Sermon – May 6, 2018
“Live Every Day Like it’s Your Last”

Anthony Bourdain has this to say on his Travel Channel show “No Reservations”: “*You learn a lot about someone when you share a meal together.*” He believes it is important to share a good meal with people, but I wonder sometimes if Anthony Bourdain ever eats by himself? Does the meal he eat taste different when he shares it with a friend, a stranger, a lover, or even a family member?

I notice that when I eat alone, no matter what I’m eating, it’s like I’m missing something. The flavors don’t exactly meet my expectations and I become unsatisfied. When the disciples spent the morning fishing and didn’t catch anything I’m sure they were disappointed. They heard a voice that told them to cast the net to the other side of the boat, and the net was filled with an abundance of fish. They heard the voice call out to them, “*come and sail to the shore*” and there they saw their friend Jesus standing by a blazing fire which gleamed vibrantly in the morning’s light. The one they loved who they thought was gone forever was back and that filled them with great joy. Plus, Jesus was making them breakfast! How sweet is that?

Some of you know I am an avid runner. I’ve competed on both the Cross Country and Track teams and completed my first Half Marathon last year with my friend Vinay Sampson. Professionals say that practice is the most important preparation a long distance runner can go through, however, I am a firm believer that getting the proper nourishment is crucial too. A runner needs fuel in order to function properly, and good nutrition is key for anyone to make the distance.

Thanks to my sport it has become a tradition in my house that the night before a race we have a big family dinner with garlic bread, salad, and plentiful servings of pasta and sauce. I enjoy those meals not only as a chance to carb-load, but because it feeds my spirit too. A good family dinner is all I need to have a nourishing day for my soul; not having them there would only leave me unsatisfied and malnourished.

My freshman year of high school I was insecure about my weight. Because of that I had a subconscious feeling of despair consume my mind and cloud my judgement. That feeling of hopelessness never allowed me to meet the expectation my parents had for me that year. I felt trapped. I might have given up but my family never did, every night after we sat down for dinner my parents told me that they always loved me no

matter what, and that it was my responsibility to pick myself up and start over. I never let myself fall into that pit of despair again.

Luckily, I am fortunate enough to be able to sit down at the table with the people I love most and enjoy conversation and a meal with them. That is something I believe I've taken for granted, because it is so much more than dinner, it is my soul food. Sure, the food we share is important for our physical health, but nothing fills us up more (spiritually) than knowing that our families deeply and truly care for us. The support I got from my family gave me the confidence to join a sports team and participate as an athlete. Four years later and I've gone from 220 pounds to a comfortable 190 and I'm doing much better in school now. None of it would have been possible if not for those family dinners we had my freshman year of high school.

Pretty soon I will have to leave the comfort of that dinner table behind, because I will report for basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and serve in the United States Army this summer. The meals I will eat in the mess hall will probably not taste even half as good, but I hope to find community at the dinner table. And even if I do wind up serving half-way across the world, I know that my family and this church will support me while I'm away.

Maybe I'll share a meal one day with friends, reminisce about those pre-race pasta dinners and feel that same kind of love, support, and care that you all gave to me these last couple of years. My hope for each one of you is to enjoy what you have at this very moment with your loved ones. Go ahead eat at the dinner table, get away from that TV, Xbox, or cell phone! Turn off the distractions and talk, cause we all need a bit of soul food in our lives. Amen.

Kyle Konkol
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“Seek Discomfort”

A common characteristic of human nature is to find comfort in routine. We tend to stick to what's known, repeating actions every day because they are familiar and safe. These tendencies can vary, but most of the time they are something like having the same morning rituals, completing the same tasks at work or school, or maybe talking to the same people. And sometimes, your routine may make you feel like your trapped, and you may think about trying something new, but you decide that it's easier to go along with it rather than change what you have become accustomed to.

Personally, I'm at fault for succumbing to a routine. For 12 years of my life I played 2 sports, soccer and gymnastics. And as the years went on I found that the only reason I continued to do them was because I felt like I had to, even though they were really no longer giving me happiness. The familiarity of the activities I had done practically my whole life was easier than switching it up, taking a safe risk, and finding other things I truly enjoyed.

But this year, my senior year in high school, I figured enough is enough, and I quit both my childhood sports. I know this may seem like I'm a 17 year old having a midlife existential crisis, but it has made me realize change is necessary. It also made me realize change isn't always an obvious solution, similar to how it wasn't an obvious solution for the disciples to switch the net to the right side of the boat. It wasn't until Jesus told them to move their net that they began to find success and catch an abundance of fish.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that Jesus told me to make the decision to quit both the sports I was playing, but something clicked in my head telling me I needed to do it. So with the extra free time I had, I decided to try some new things, which is always a bit intimidating. For example, I joined a local archery league, which on some nights I'm the youngest person there by about 20 years, and I also took up pole vaulting at my high school. Now, both of these activities are something I never expected to do, and I'm by no means the best at either of them, but they force me to step out of my comfort zone and because of that I have never been happier.

So you may be asking, how does all of this relate to soul food? And you know, I'm still not exactly sure what soul food even means. However I interpret it as something that gives you purpose, and more importantly, makes you happy. And what I think is great about soul food is that everyone has a different "Food" that nourishes their soul, and it all comes down to just figuring out what it is. For example, some people may find being in nature to be good for their soul, some feel fulfilled by community service, and others may find joy and feel complete by sharing a meal with an old friend.

As for me, I'm confident that my soul food is seeking discomfort. The past few years of my life have been a blur, so much so that I'm unable to differentiate my freshman and sophomore year of high school, which is really scary for me to think about. So, to fix this, I now challenge myself to try something new every day, because I know that it's the deviations in my life that I'll remember 10 years from now. In addition, being the president of PF has really made this year stand out for me compared to others. And I can't help but thank all my fellow PFs and adult advisors for making this journey so special for me by constantly pushing me to be my best and never letting me be content.

So if there's one thing you should take from my sermon today, it's to actively seek in your community, and in yourself, to find what fuels your soul. And don't be afraid to take a break from your busy life and spend some time thinking about what makes you happy, because at the end of your day, that's the only thing that truly matters.