

# Patsy's Plates

## Inspired by Mark 6:30-34

The cooking team gathered together with the head chef, Patsy, and reported all they had cooked and packaged. She said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” People had been coming and going in great numbers to pick up the sustenance they offered during these extremely difficult times. No one knew how to navigate a pandemic, but this team had rolled up their sleeves and resisted their fears to pitch in and feed the hungry. It was such a basic need that had been taken for granted by so many until now. They had been at it for months, longer than anyone had anticipated. The catering business had taken on new life with greater significance than ever before. What had been convenience and luxury was now necessity — life-saving work. This had been a particularly long and tiring day. Patsy and her crew had been so busy they themselves had not even had the opportunity to eat.

Patsy grew up in her grandmother's kitchen. From a very young age, she would drag a footstool to the counter so she could help her MayMay prepare the big Sunday dinners. Those were grand occasions with a house full of family enjoying a wonderful meal made from scratch seasoned with lots of love and laughter. No one missed the weekly tradition without a good enough excuse, one that required chicken soup to be delivered because you were sick in bed! She learned a lot from MayMay who fed her belly and her curiosity. So much so that cooking became Patsy's passion and she made a career out of it! Her vocation was to feed the hungry.

The company, named Patsy's Plates, was a huge success. She grew quite a dream team who kept her many clients happy! One unique feature of her business was that on any given weekend, she could be serving dinner in the governor's mansion and on the same day catering a picnic for a child's birthday party. Patsy never outgrew her britches, as MayMay would say. So when the Pandemic hit and parties were shut down, Patsy didn't blink an eye. People still needed to eat. She knew this truth and wanted no one in her city to go without food. She stayed true to her vocation to feed the hungry and quickly created “Patsy's Packages” offering simple, healthy meals that were individually packaged and

stored in a climate controlled pantry on the porch of her business. There was a mail slot in the door to leave payment if you could, but no obligation to pay. Word spread quickly and people picked up the meals daily.

After re-stocking the pantry one afternoon, Patsy paused to pray for all those in need that the hungry may find their way to her porch. She felt truly blessed to use her gifts in such a tangible way serving God's people. Patsy stepped back inside but took a moment to close her eyes and ponder the largeness of that reality. Her auburn curls fell over her face as she bowed her head in silent awe and wonder at it all. Looking up she glanced out the window in time to see an elderly man slowly and painstakingly making his way up the steps to the pantry. His shoes were worn and dusty, and seemed to want to get in the way of his cane. His faded pants were the size of his younger, active self, but now hung on him like an old tarp over a worn out car. The man didn't notice Patsy watching as he reached in and took out a single meal. He bowed his head and prayed blessings over the unknown angels who prepared this food for the nourishment of a stranger's body. "Thank You, Lord," he cried.

The mask he was wearing served as a handkerchief to hide behind and absorb the tears. He dropped two dollars in the mail slot, all he could afford these days, and slowly made his way back down the steps. Later that evening, Patsy caught sight of a young mother arriving with a baby in her arms, a toddler clinging to her leg, and a slightly older child running ahead to reach the top of the stairs first. He eagerly opened the pantry and exclaimed, "Look at all this food, Mom! I'm so hungry—let's get a bunch of it! I'm strong enough to carry it all!" This lil guy reminded Patsy of herself at that age with his freckled face and head full of red curls. He also seemed to love food as much as her!

The young boy's mother turned this mission of mercy into a teachable moment. "We won't take more than we need for tonight. Tomorrow is a new day, and your Daddy will hopefully get paid so we can buy our own groceries. We just didn't have quite enough to stretch through this past week. These nice people cooked for *everyone* like us, not *only* us. So, we will take only what we need, and we will come back to repay them one day when things are better."

This time, Patsy's mask was the catcher of tears. The weighty exhaustion Patsy felt was both physical and emotional. She saw it in her employees also. That is

why she decided they needed some time away. They needed to step away to a space that is secluded and safe to rest and restore themselves. So, they went off in a few cars to her grandmother's old cabin nestled in the pines. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all over the nearby towns and arrived at the rustic cabin before them. The people had mistakenly thought Patsy's Packages was changing locations, and they wanted to be first in line.

When the team arrived and saw the hungry crowd, Patsy's heart was moved with pity for them for they were like flowers without the rain, and she instructed her team to continue the good work they had already begun. Their great need re-energized her. Patsy managed to find better balance in the coming weeks as more services opened up to help the city swim through the struggles without drowning. This eased their work and prepared them for the long haul of the situation the world was facing.

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