

John 6:24-35

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent.' So they said, 'What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Jesus answered: 'I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' 'Sir,' they said 'give us that bread always.' Jesus answered: 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.'

The people gathered around Jesus along the lakeshore were concerned only with their need of food and drink. They were so enthusiastic about his multiplying the loaves that they wanted to make Jesus their king. They were blind to the spiritual significance of the miracle, and the message he wanted to teach through it. "Do not work for food that cannot last," he warned, "but for food that lasts to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering."

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Year B

1st August 2021

"I Am the Bread of Life"



All of today's readings are about the battle between the needs of self and the need to trust in God, be it the people of Israel on their way to the Promised Land, who complain to Moses and Aaron about how hungry they are, or the people in Capernaum 1300 years later who have had their hunger satisfied by God, and yet, still want more of the same.

The evil one will constantly tempt us to satisfy our hunger with illusory desires, he will encourage us to complain that we haven't got enough or that things are not being done as we would want them. As Christians, surrendering to God is a life-long daily battle, so we need to be reminded constantly that Jesus, and only Jesus is the bread of eternal life and that whoever comes to Him will never be hungry and whoever believes in Him will never thirst.

Opening Prayer

Draw near to your servants, O Lord, and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness, that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide, you may restore what you have created and keep safe what you have restored.

Exodus 16:2-4,12-15

The whole community of the sons of Israel began to complain against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said to them, 'Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our heart's content! As it is, you have brought us to this wilderness to starve this whole company to death!'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now I will rain down bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people are to go out and gather the day's portion; I propose to test them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or not.'

'I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Say this to them, "Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have bread to your heart's content. Then you will learn that I, the Lord, am your God."' And so it came about: quails flew up in the evening, and they covered the camp; in the morning there was a coating of dew all round the camp. When the coating of dew lifted, there on the surface of the desert was a thing delicate, powdery, as fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When they saw this, the sons of Israel said to one another, 'What is that?' not knowing what it was. 'That' said Moses to them 'is the bread the Lord gives you to eat.'

God is training his people Israel to trust in Him. These were a pagan people who made human sacrifices to a multitude of gods, who had no moral laws and who were corrupt. As we continue to read through the book of Exodus, time and time again as they journey through the desert, no matter how many times God answers their prayers, we will hear of the constant complaining of the Hebrews and how they turn away from the Lord at the drop of a hat when their needs of self are not met. They forget to believe in the covenant made by God to them through Abraham and they fail once again to trust in God.

Psalms 77(78):3-4,23-25,54

The things we have heard and understood, the things our fathers have told us, these we will not hide from their children but will tell them to the next generation:

the glories of the Lord and his might and the marvellous deeds he has done, Yet he commanded the clouds above and opened the gates of heaven. He rained down manna for their food, and gave them bread from heaven.

Mere men ate the bread of angels. He sent them abundance of food; So he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won.

Ephesians 4:17,20-24

I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live. Now that is hardly the way you have learnt from Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus. You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.

St Paul declares that aimless living will lead us exactly nowhere. "I urge you in the name of the Lord," he says, "not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live." In paganism, according to Paul, lack of direction led to deep moral lapses and indecency of every kind, or spiritual collapse. But he says. "If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, until it has built itself up, in love" (4:15f). In other words, Christ must be felt as a living influence in the lives of all his true followers.

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord;
No one can come to the Father except through me. **Alleluia!**

(Gospel overleaf)

(Gospel Reflection – continued)

Jesus spoke of himself as the way. He is the way to live in this life; he shows us how to live well. Thereby, he is also the way to eternal life; those who follow in his way will live forever. Jesus is concerned about what endures not just into successive generations but what endures into eternity. He understood that we have been created by God to live forever and he came to show us how to attain that eternal life and to empower us to attain it. That is why he speaks of himself in the gospel as the bread of life. He endures into eternity and those who receive him in faith and walk in his way will also endure into eternity. If we come to him and stay with him our deepest hungers and thirsts will be satisfied in this life and more fully in the next. When we think about what endures, we are to think first of Jesus. He is the gateway to enduring life, for ourselves and for all we love and value.

Prayer over the Offerings

Graciously sanctify these gifts, O Lord, we pray, and, accepting the oblation of this spiritual sacrifice, make of us an eternal offering to you.



Prayer after Communion

Accompany with constant protection, O Lord, those you renew with these heavenly gifts and, in your never-failing care for them, make them worthy of eternal redemption.