

Scripture Study

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Exodus 16:2-4,12-15

(Ps 78:3-4,23-25,54)

Ephesians 4:17,20-24

John 6:24-35

Overview of the Gospel:

- This is the second of five Gospel readings from John's Gospel in our Sunday lectionary break from the Gospel according to St. Mark (which we are primarily reading from this year).
- After the feeding of the 5000, which we heard about last week, the readings skip over an episode where Jesus walks upon the water (John 6:16-21).
- As was noted last week, the time is Passover—one year before the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. As this discourse opens, he is now teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:24, 59).
- The crowds seek Jesus out, not because they have real faith in him but, as Jesus perceives, because he gave them bread to eat. Jesus invites them to seek out heavenly food, and to place their trust in him. This prompts the crowd into asking Jesus how he compares to Moses, who the Jews revered as the giver of their religious law.
- Jesus previously filled them with bread for their stomachs; now he will try to lead them into a deeper understanding of who he himself is and what he can really do for them.

Questions:

- According to St. Paul (in verses 18-19, omitted from Sunday's 2nd reading), what causes the mental futility, darkened understanding, and alienation of our pagan society? To what types of behavior does it lead? What might be the effects of the change he proposes in the last three verses of our 2nd reading?
- What does the crowd ask Jesus to do in order that they may believe in him (verse 30)? How does Jesus use the crowd's interest in food to illustrate what he wants them to understand? What are the similarities and the differences between the manna (see Exodus 16) and the Bread of Life (verse 35)?
- Why, primarily, were the crowds interested in the signs Jesus performed (John 2:23-24, 6:2)? Is seeking Jesus always commendable? Do we seek Jesus for *himself*, or for what he can do for us (see CCC 305)?
- Jesus claims to be the true bread from heaven and that all who come to him will never know hunger or thirst. What does it mean to "come to Jesus" (verse 35; CCC 2830, 1817)?
- Are there areas in your life that are (or would be) difficult to give up control of to God?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 151, 2836-37

Closing prayer

This is our daily Bread; take It daily, that It may profit thee daily. Live, as to deserve to receive It daily. –St. Augustine

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Lord, give us this bread always"

Scripture: John 6:24-35

So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

Meditation: What do you most hunger and thirst for in life? Jesus addressed this issue with those who sought him after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Where they simply hungry for things which satisfy the body or for that which satisfies the heart



and soul? Jesus echoes the question posed by the prophet Isaiah: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy" (Isaiah 55:2)? Only God can satisfy the spiritual hunger in our heart and soul—the hunger for truth, for life, and for companionship and love.

Jesus makes a claim which only God can make: He is the *true bread of heaven* that can satisfy the deepest hunger, thirst, and longing which every human being experiences in life. When the Israelites journeyed in the desert wilderness they could find no food to keep themselves alive. They complained that God had left them there to perish. God tested them to see if they would trust in his personal care and provision for them. He gave them sufficient manna each day to sustain them on their journey to the Promised Land. This daily provision of manna in the wilderness could not produce long lasting satisfaction nor eternal life for the Israelites. It did however prefigure and point to the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper which Jesus gave to his disciples on the eve of his sacrifice. The bread which Jesus offers his disciples sustains us not only on our journey to the heavenly paradise, it gives us the

abundant supernatural life of God which sustains us now and for all eternity. When we receive from the Lord's Table we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood and partakers of his divine life. Ignatius of Antioch (35-107 A.D.) calls it the "one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ" (*Ad Eph.* 20,2). This supernatural food is healing for both body and soul and strength for our journey heavenward.

Jesus also spoke about the *works of God* and what we must do to be doing the *works of God*, namely to *believe in God's Son whom he has sent into the world*. Jesus offers a new relationship with God which issues in a new kind of life: a life of sacrificial love, selfless service, and the forgiveness of others which corresponds to God's mercy, goodness and loving kindness; a life of holiness, purity, and truth which corresponds to God's holiness; and a life of obedience and trust which corresponds to God's offer of abundant life, peace, and happiness. This is the work which Jesus directs us to and enables us to perform in the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you hunger for the bread which comes down from heaven and thirst for the words of everlasting life?

"Lord Jesus, you are the true Bread of Heaven. Only you alone can truly satisfy the deepest longing and hunger of my heart. Nourish me with the bread of life that I may be truly satisfied in you alone as the giver of life."

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