



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 4 2024**

Theme: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

Gathering Prayer

All: 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. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 6:24-35

²⁴So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶Jesus 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. ²⁷Do not labour for food which perishes, but 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." ²⁸Then they said to him, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?" ³¹Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³²Jesus 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. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always." ³⁵Jesus 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."

Gospel Focus

Last Sunday's story of feeding the crowd began the Year B series of Eucharistic gospels from John. Jesus is here making wild, radical claims. We, living with two thousand years of Christian history and a well-developed sacramental theology behind us, are accustomed to this. Of course, Jesus is bread; of course, he feeds us with his body. However, for those hearing it, this is a new, weird, horrifying concept. It is so hard for them to grasp that our gospel in a few more weeks will see many of them forsake Jesus

and return to their ordinary lives. In addition to the claim that cannibalism is suddenly ok, Jesus' "I am" statement is blasphemous; he is claiming for himself the name of God revealed to Moses, Jesus is shocking his audience here. His truths are not easy to wrap our minds around.

Gospel Reflection

"Better the devil you know than the one you don't know." Such popular wisdom reflects the reluctance of most people to change, even when the current situation is difficult. It is easier to hang on to what is, using familiar coping mechanisms, than it is to risk something new that might result in greater difficulties. Such is the complaint of the Israelites to Moses in the first reading. They would rather have stayed enslaved in Egypt with all the suffering that entailed, than to risk the freedom that brought a whole new set of challenges.

One challenge concerned food. For those who migrate from one land to another, one of the hardest changes is to eat the food of those of another culture. One longs for the familiarity of "comfort food" from home.

God is not indifferent to the plight of the Israelites. Morning and evening God provides plenty of manna and quail. However, the manna is completely unfamiliar to the Israelites. "What is this?" they ask. Moses has to tell them. "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." It may have filled them physically, but it does not seem to have satisfied them on other levels. God's providence never fails, but it does not always come in the way we want or expect.

In the gospel, Jesus invites the crowd to shift their expectations from outward signs to inner transformation. He has just fed a hungry crowd of five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish, yet they ask him for a sign so that they may see and believe. They are looking right at the One who is the very bread of life, but they do not see him as such. He tells them that the same God who provided for their ancestors in the desert is also the One who fed the crowd, and who gives life to the world. To come to Jesus and believe in him requires letting go of familiar habits like filling up on "food that perishes," and allowing him to give "food that endures for eternal life."

Grazing on junk food or trying to satisfy our spiritual hungers with constant noise and busyness are the "devils" we know. What would happen if we carved out an inner emptiness to let the bread of life satisfy our deepest hungers and thirsts?

Risking an unknown future, the Israelites crossed the desert and entered the land of freedom into which God led them through Moses. The crowd in the gospel crossed over the sea of Galilee, opening themselves to the possibility of being filled forever by the One who would also entrust to them the "works of God" to feed others and give "life to the world." This mission can take us into strange territory, where we risk letting go of the familiar and tasting the "bread" or rice or tortillas of others. Gradually, we turn from looking for the external "signs" toward seeking to become one with the very bread of life, who fills us to the full.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Exod 16:2-4, 12-15

The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!" Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not. "I have

heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God." In the evening quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

Responsorial Psalm — Ps 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

R: The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

What we have heard and know, and what our fathers have declared to us, we will declare to the generation to come the glorious deeds of the Lord and his strength and the wonders that he wrought. **(R)**

He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; he rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread. **(R)**

Man ate the bread of angels, food he sent them in abundance. And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountains his right hand had won. **(R)**

Second Reading — Eph 4:17, 20-24

¹⁷ Brothers and sisters: I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; ²⁰ that is not how you learned Christ, ²¹ assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that ²² you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

423. We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He 'came from God',⁴ 'descended from heaven',⁵ and 'came in the flesh'.⁶ For 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.'⁷

728. Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully, until he himself has been glorified through his Death and Resurrection. Nevertheless, little by little he alludes to him even in his teaching of the multitudes, as when he reveals that his own flesh will be food for the life of the world.¹¹⁰ He also alludes to the Spirit in speaking to Nicodemus,¹¹¹ to the Samaritan woman,¹¹² and to those who take part in the feast of Tabernacles.¹¹³ To his disciples he speaks openly of the Spirit in connection with prayer¹¹⁴ and with the witness they will have to bear.¹¹⁵

1296. Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal.¹⁰⁸ Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."¹⁰⁹ This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our

enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.¹¹⁰

Sharing and Discussion

1. ³⁵Jesus 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." How do you personally connect with the Holy Eucharist?
2. ²⁷Do not labor for food which perishes, but the food which endures to eternal life." What are the daily challenges you face in trying to follow this teaching of Christ?

Closing Prayer

All: Generous God, you sustained your people with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. Hear our prayers that we might answer your call to discipleship each day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen