

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

18TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - August 1st, 2021

OPENING PRAYER



Leader: *The Lord gave them bread from heaven.*

All: **He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; He rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread.**

Leader: *Man ate the bread of angels, food he sent them in abundance.*

All: **The Lord gives us bread from heaven.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Exodus 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, 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."



Let us remember that during these Sundays we will be reading in the Gospel extracts from chapter six of the Gospel of John, whose central theme is Jesus Christ, the "Bread of Life"; that is, an explanation of the Eucharist that Christ anticipated a long time before celebrating the Last Supper. As is customary, the First Reading brings us forward to the theme of the Gospel, and in this passage we see how God provides his people with the food they need to follow his journey to the Promised Land.

God, who is all love, does not punish the distrustful and ungrateful people who complain to Moses about the lack of food that used to be abundant in times of slavery but now, when they were free, was scarce. Instead of giving them a punishment He sends them meat and bread. The quail that abounded in a strange way in the desert served as food, as well as the bread that they gathered from the ground. They had never seen such a thing, and when those flakes appeared on the floor one morning, they wondered "Manáh?" (that means 'What is this?'). Later they discovered that it could be eaten and that it tasted like bread. Since then they have never lacked that "bread from heaven" which was called "Manna".

As a preview of the other bread that God would give us again some fifteen centuries later through the Body of Christ, that manna was a gift from God to help his people move forward, so that they could arrive and settle in the Promised Land. Later, in another book of the Old Testament a ceremony is read in which the people of God after settling in the Promised Land and being able to dedicate themselves to producing their own food, no longer needed manna, and God stopped giving it to them. In a similar way, we go in this life on a kind of pilgrimage to the other Promised Land, the New Jerusalem, Heaven, and as an aid to reach that goal the Lord offers us that

other and better food, which is the Sacred Host, the body of Christ,. The Eucharist is a source of grace and nourishes our spirit until a day comes when our pilgrimage in this world ends, and when we arrive before the majestic presence of the Lord, we no longer will need it.

- (1) Moses acknowledges the need of his people, but is unable to meet their need. Who do you turn to and who responds in a similar situation? What lessons can be learned from this?
- (2) The Israelite complained and thought that at least as slaves they would have what they now yearned for. Sometimes we have decided to give up a bad habit but from time to time we fall to do that again. It's like a kind of nostalgia for sin. Reflect and compare with the attitude of the Israelite in the desert.
- (3) How is our trust in God in our life today? Do we need to reinforce it? What can we advise each other?
- (4) God sent them the Manna but required them to take only what they would need each day. Comment.

SECOND READING [Ephesians 4 (17), (20-24)]

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; that is not how you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

The dress distinguishes people. Many professions have a dress, a suit, a uniform suited to the demands of the profession. And the dress also distinguishes the moments of life: work, sports, parties. All this means that the dress expresses the feelings of mourning, partying, work, moods, what is lived, life itself. This symbolic force of the dress has also been applied many times in the religious environment: sacred dresses to express contact with the divinity. Through clothing we can distinguish those who act as mediators before God. Also sometimes we can deduce the religion that a person practices by the way they dress.

As the life of Christ is communicated to us through the sacraments, the symbol of the "dress" takes shape in the liturgy. Baptism is a "putting off" sin and evil, and being clothed in Christ; this is expressed in baptism by taking off one's clothes and putting on the white garment. God's salvation is given to us as a distinctive garment. For this reason, Saint Paul says that "being baptized into Christ, we have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). He conceives of conversion as a change of dress, a "shedding" of the old man and putting on the new Man, putting on Christ, adopting his criteria, having his feelings, living his life. Leave a dirty dress, to dress clean.

Before putting on the "new human condition," Jesus' disciples must put off the old man. This implies a deep renewal of the mind and the heart, it is necessary to abandon the old prejudices and the selfish interests from which they spring. Only in this way can we listen to Jesus in the gospel and truly love him in the poor.

- (1) What identifies us as Christians? How can people know that we are followers of Christ? (Read Matthew 7:16)
- (2) Read Romans 12: 2 Reflect and comment
- (3) Read Romans 12: 1 Reflect and comment
- (4) Read John 13:35 Reflect and comment

GOSPEL [John 6 (24-35)]

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."



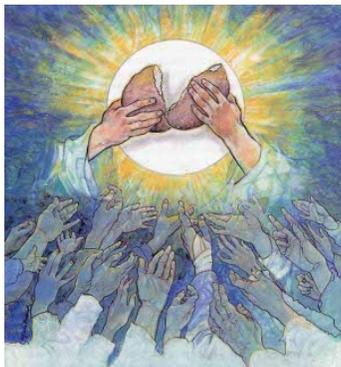
So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave 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."

So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst"

After the multiplication of the loaves that the Church presented to us last week in the Gospel, we can reflect on two parallel concepts: Bread from the earth, which satisfies the hunger of the body, and Bread from heaven, which satisfies the hunger of the spirit. Moses, who is God's instrument to satisfy temporary hunger, or Jesus, who is an instrument to satisfy eternal hunger.



Christ is offered as the food of abundant life, not only for those who were present at the time when he spoke those words, but for all the people of the world who dare to believe and have faith in him.

The bread that we earn with the effort of our hands and the sweat of our brow is not a living bread, but a food that postpones the moment of our death. On the contrary, the bread that Christ offers is not a bread that prolongs death, but rather that communicates life. So, the work that allows us to have that bread of life is not the work of our hands but the work of our faith.

If we spend our lives working only for the bread that postpones death, we lose. And we lose because we will always need to have a spirit fed with the bread of life in order to discover God's will, carry it out and then present ourselves without blemish before the Lord. Whoever acts like this loses: he loses his bread, loses his job and loses his life. But who, in addition to working to earn the bread that postpones death, also works to conquer the bread of life, will have been wise because they will have accepted Christ's invitation to have a life that does not end.

The meals we eat every day are "dead" foods. We have to kill the life of the animals and vegetables that we consume before digesting them. All the contrary to the food that the Lord gives us is the Body of Christ, which is alive. When we eat the bread of life, we do not have to take Christ's life. On the contrary, he communicates life to whoever eats it ...

(1) Are we working to obtain the bread that gives us life or only for the one that delays death?

(2) What has to be done to choose working for the bread that gives life?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*