

Our Sunday readings come in a 3-year cycle, which basically correspond to the 3 synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. And this year is Year B in which we generally read from the Gospel of Mark. But, but the Gospel of Mark is pretty short, so in the middle of the summer, every third year we have a month where we will listen to the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John, which is known as the Bread of Life discourse.

John's Gospel is unique, at the last supper we read of Jesus washing his disciples' feet but we do not read of him taking the bread and wine and declaring that they are his body and blood. There is no institution narrative. However, John's Gospel is filled with Eucharistic images and themes. When he uses the term the Passover of the Jews, he is connected the Passover sacrifice to Jesus and his sacrifice, he is making the connection to the Mass.

So today we begin, Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John.

And so how does it start? With the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The crowds have followed Jesus and have been listening to him and now it is time to feed them. But they have nothing, not enough for such a crowd. But Jesus takes the offering of the young boy with his 5 barley loaves and two fish; he takes his offering and uses it to feed the crowds and it is more than enough. There are 12 baskets of leftovers.

The crowds are impressed with the miracle. There is nothing like a free meal. They want to crown Jesus as king. Jesus is attractive; he is filling a need; he is giving away gifts; he is drawing the people in.

However, when we continue our reading of the Bread of Life discourse, we will see Jesus pricking this balloon. The people are impressed but not for the right reasons and so he will challenge them to go deeper, to go beyond the fill of bread to the spiritual good of the Eucharist, which is his body, which is the Bread of Life.

The emphasis in the Bread of Life discourse is that we are to understand the Eucharist in absolute and literal terms. Jesus will be very clear- you must eat my body and drink my blood to have eternal life. They are real food. Food that will lead us to eternity.

In the RCIA process, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the candidates will go through the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. In that Rite they are questioned.

What do you ask of God's Church? Faith?

What does Faith offer you? Eternal life.

May I suggest a little summer reading- over these next days pick up your bible and read Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John and hear the challenging words of Jesus. It begins rather nicely-a free lunch, a pleasant summer picnic but our Lord is so much more. Are we seeking faith? Are we seeking eternal life?