

Homily for 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B 2021

Do we seek the bread given by the father, or the father himself who gives us bread?"

More than a year ago, the year of the Eucharist was proclaimed by Bishop Bradley... Little did he know that a Pandemic was to hit the whole world.

People stayed away from Church and the Eucharist for a very long time. I was quite worried whether people would come back after the pandemic. How did that impact on us, did it become our new normal, or did it made us crave to receive Jesus in the eucharist?

Someone argued that God is everywhere, right. But as you receive him in the eucharist, there is something more, we become one with him; In marriage, the two become one, we receive new life.

We live as hungry people in a hungry world. Everyone is looking for something that will sustain and nourish life, something that will feed and energize, and something that will fill and satisfy. Due to hunger, the Israelites grumbled and revolted against Moses, and consequently, against God. They doubted their leaders and put God to Test. They hastily forgot how good and merciful God has been to them and, how he separated the Red Sea and defeated their enemies to save them.

In the book of Exodus 16 they begin to receive the manna after leaving Egypt, but once they get to the promised land 40 years later in the Book of Joshua 4 & 5, the miracle of the manna ceases. It's not coming down from heaven anymore. The miracle lasts for 40 years, it's just for the period while they're in the desert. The moment they cross over the river Jordan in the Book of Joshua it says the manna ceased.

After feeding the multitude with 5 loaves and 2 fish, it's the next day and the picnic is over so to speak. Today they show up and their first question is "Rabbi, when did you come here? They do not marvel at yesterday's miracle, give thanks for God's generosity, or even wonder who this Rabbi is. It was as if they were worried that they might have missed the next meal, that Jesus started without them and they are too late.

Jesus points out that the physical food perishes; the kind of food he is talking about lasts forever.

Jesus is trying to lead them beyond the earthly food of the loaves that were multiplied and fed to them, to the heavenly food, to the supernatural food that he has not yet given them as Son of Man, which of course is going to be the Eucharist.

So, what the crowds are doing here is saying to Jesus, we want you not only to do what Moses did, we want you to do better than Moses, we want you to give us manna always, not just for 40 years but forever. That is the springboard for Jesus beginning the famous bread of life discourse.

Jesus is the true bread from heaven that's going to give life to the world, that's going to usher in the age of salvation, that's going to fulfill the expectation of the Jews that one day the bread from

heaven would come back and that it would be the Messiah who would bring it. In this case he's telling them not only am I going to bring the manna, I am the true manna from heaven, I am the bread of God that gives life to the world, that feeds you and quenches your hunger and thirst in a way that the miraculous loaves I multiplied for you yesterday could never do.

I love pointing this out, when the manna comes. It's not just that it comes in the morning but it says here that in the morning dew lay round-about the camp, and when the dew had gone up, the manna was on the ground.

For us as Catholics this is a significant verse because we'll see the language reoccur in the Eucharistic prayer of the priest, at particularly the moment in what's called the Epiclesis, when the priest calls down the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine to change them into the body and blood of Christ. He's going to say Lord send down your spirit upon these gifts like the dewfall.

It's an allusion to the Book of Exodus and to the manna from heaven. Just as the old manna comes with the dew from God, so too the new manna is going to come and the Holy Spirit is like dew.

When Jesus gives us the bread of life, we have life and the life of God changes us. We love, serve, forgive, as God does. The Eucharist continues the transformation we received at baptism. Put aside the old self and put on a new self, created in God's image and likeness. The eucharist deepens us in the life of Christ living in us.

It is not the act of receiving communion that makes us pleasing to God, it is letting that communion truly transform us so that at every hour, every moment we are obedient to the God we receive. Being in communion with him in the way we think, decide, forgive, love, serve.

Today, let us say yes to that transformation so that as Paul told us in the letter the Ephesians, we will put on that new man created in God's image, and bring to the whole world the bread of life.