

Jesus fed the 5,000 with our Gospel reading last Sunday. Today he begins the Bread of Life Discourse. Next Sunday Jesus will continue to teach us: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51).

All of today’s readings help to explain the Lord’s Prayer. “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” As the crowd follows Jesus, he explains that God the Father has set his seal on him. So they asked him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” (Jn 6:28). As you start each day, begin with a simple prayer so that you try to do will of the Father here on earth: “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?”

The Lord’s Prayer continues: “Give us this day our daily bread.” In the wilderness the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. It is no coincidence, that the community is in the wilderness of Sin. They do not appreciate what the Lord has done for them. They complain that they would rather be slaves with full bellies, than to be free and to have to make sacrifices.

God looks beyond their complaints and responds to their needs. He does not give in to their gluttonous desires. Instead, he offers them only what they need. “Then the LORD said to Moses: I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you” (Ex 16:4a). People may come grumbling to us. And perhaps we may rightly judge their desires as asking for far more than is necessary. If we are to respond as God does, to accomplish his works, we must look beyond the gruff manner of a complaint and respond to the genuine need of our brothers and sisters.

As we move from the Old Testament to the New, Jesus gives a deeper meaning to “our daily bread.” 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.” Pope Benedict XVI explains that “read in the light of Jesus’ great discourse on the bread of life, the miracle of the manna naturally points beyond itself to the new world in which ... the eternal Word of God — will be our bread, the food of the eternal wedding banquet.”ⁱ

Like the Israelites in the desert, we need our daily bread. Jesus does not stop there and reduce our needs to bread alone, to a biological necessity. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4; Dt 8:3). Jesus goes far beyond the physical need to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, “gives Himself to us in the Sacrament [of the Eucharist], and in that way the eternal Word for the first time becomes fully manna, the gift of the bread of the future given to us already today.”ⁱⁱ With this great gift comes a great responsibility: “when we pray for ‘tomorrow’s’ bread today, we are reminded to live already today from tomorrow, from the love of God, which calls us all to be responsible for one another.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Lord’s Prayer continues: “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Saint Paul explains to the Ephesians: “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” (Eph 4:22-24).

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” The grumbling Israelites were in the midst of temptation in the wilderness of Sin. The Lord did more than feed them. “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” (Ps 78:25,54). God’s love is enduring, his covenant is

everlasting. Through Moses over the course of more than 40 years, God led his people to the Promised Land.

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst” (Jn 6:35). Jesus invites us to receive his Precious Body in Holy Communion. The Bread of Life that Jesus offers us helps us as we wander through the desert of our own lives. Jesus offered his Body and Blood for us on the cross as the sign of a new and everlasting covenant. Jesus leads us to the Promised Land of Eternity.

“Then God led forth his people like sheep, guided them like a flock through the wilderness. He led them on secure and unafraid ... And he brought them to his holy mountain, the hill his right hand had won” (Ps 78:52, 53a, 54).

ⁱ Benedict XVI. Jesus of Nazareth. Explained at adoremus.org/2007/07/the-meaning-of-quotour-daily-breadquot/

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.