

5<sup>th</sup> August 2018 (18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Exodus 16:2-4,12-15; Psalm 77(78):3-4,23-25,54; Ephesians 4:17,20-24; John 6:24-35.

### **Bread of life.**

Where do I find my nourishment? What type of food do I look for?

Last week a large crowd was following Jesus and he 'fed' them with his teaching and with bread and fish. The gospel writer wanted us to note that while the manna the Israelites ate in the desert rotted and had to be thrown away, the bread that Jesus provided could be gathered so it was not wasted! Even in the Exodus narrative the Jews were aware of two types of manna; the manna gathered on the first five days of the week was useless the next day, but the manna gathered on the sixth day lasted until the Sabbath, when they could not work to gather food.

Today Jesus wants his listeners to remember that distinction and to start looking for the bread that lasts. The bread Jesus had given them the day before was similar to the bread Moses had given their ancestors, it only provided them with limited physical nourishment and after some time they felt hungry and needed to eat again. Today Jesus invites his listeners to look out for the food that lasts, food that gives true life.

In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, he taught them to ask God to provide them with daily bread; food that would nourish them on their daily journey. While we certainly need food to give us our physical nourishment, that is not the only type of food Jesus wants us to look for and to ask for. While the manna in the desert and the bread provided by Jesus were both miraculous foods, and hence a type of 'bread from heaven,' Jesus himself is the one true bread given to us by God.

Jesus tells his listeners: I am the Bread of Life. When we eat the food provided by Jesus, when we listen to his word, the Word of God, then we are not only nourished for a few hours until we go searching for food again, but it is food that will last and will lead us to the true life. While this 'bread of life' teaching is only found in the gospel according to John, when we read the birth narrative in the gospel according to Luke, we read that Jesus was presented to the world in a manger, a feeding trough! Perhaps the gospel according to Luke is also telling us that we need to be fed on this bread from heaven!

The follower of Christ, the Christian, is the one who listens to God's word and 'chews' on it, making it food for life. This is the work God wants from us, to build our life solidly on his word, and Jesus truly is the word of God become human. When we gather to celebrate Eucharist, we are invited to two different meals; we are first invited to sit at the table of God's word and then to sit at the table of Jesus' body and blood. From its beginning the Church considered, both tables to be very closely linked and in many of our gospel narratives we notice this strong relationship between Jesus' teachings and food; he feeds us with his word and with his body!

What food do we seek? While it is essential that we nourish and respect our bodies, and beg God for our daily bread, we also need to be always open to listen to and reflect upon God's word. Like the material food that we eat, the word of God nourishes us and help us mature in faith and in our faithful discipleship of God. The crowds in today's gospel narrative went searching for Jesus: 'Lord when did you come here?' We too need to go searching for this food that nourishes us for eternal life.

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