

August 1, 2021

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15

Eph 4:17, 20-24

Jn 6:24-35

GROW: In our house, we know we've got a situation when we run out of bread. It's the staff of life, yes, but also the stuff that makes toast, goes with soup or salad, and smells so good when we bake it ourselves. So perhaps some of us can relate to the Israelites in the first reading as they "grumbled against Moses and Aaron," before the Lord promised to "rain down bread from heaven for [them]." On a deeper level, perhaps we also truly understand the importance of what Jesus tells his disciples in today's Gospel: that the bread from heaven which the Father gives will not only satisfy their physical hunger, but give life to the world. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." Just as the disciples heartily responded "give us this bread always," today's readings encourage us to long not only for all good gifts from the Father, but specifically for that one, unique gift of the Son whose nourishment to us in the Eucharist transforms us and "gives life to the world."

GO: Like many Catholics, I attended Mass online for much of 2020 and the first half of 2021. Initially, it seemed like enough, and I was immensely grateful for the opportunity to hear the Word of God, see the Lord in the Eucharist, and to receive him spiritually. However, as we began to return to church this past spring, I truly felt the enormity of what I had been missing: receiving the Eucharist, and doing so within a community. As we hear Christ's words in the bread of life discourse over the next few Sundays, the magnitude of God's gracious gift should become ever more apparent. When we receive the Eucharist at Mass, we partake in the body and blood of Jesus, sharing in the divine banquet that leads us to everlasting life, and drawing closer to Jesus and to one another in the process. Nourished by his presence within us, we can then go out and share the bread of life with others. What that looks like will differ for each of us, but ultimately it is all for the purpose of accomplishing the works of God: believing in the One he sent and giving witness to that belief in all we say and do.

ACTION: Paul's Letter to the Ephesians admonishes his listeners to "put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth." As we begin each day this week, we can pray for the grace to "put on a new self" and let go of those things that get in the way of our own holiness.