

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 4:4b

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

One does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:24-35; L113B

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there,

they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.

Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."

So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?"

What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written:

He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 300.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Sourdough, pumpernickel, rye, whole wheat, ancient grain, pita, white, and many more are the breads from which we can choose in our modern, convenient grocery stores. Variety and selection are the hallmarks of our society. It's sometimes easy to forget how basic bread was to an ancient culture. It certainly wasn't a specialty item that afforded choice and distinction. Bread was the staple of life, consumed daily as an essential source of nutrition.

The day after the "multiplication of the loaves" the people were still seeking Jesus and found him in Capernaum. He admonishes them to seek not perishable food but the food of everlasting life. They only need to believe in him. The people, having just witnessed the sign of the multiplication of loaves the day before, wonder what further sign Jesus might give them. Irony, which is a hallmark of John's gospel, should not be lost.

The people demand a sign similar to Moses providing manna in the desert. At that time the Hebrew people had left Egypt and were wandering in the desert. They were fed by bread from heaven that appeared each morning. Jesus in turn reminds them that it was not Moses, but the Father who gives "true bread from heaven." Jesus' addition of the word "true is significant. In a double entendre, Jesus

says that the true bread "comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." This sets the stage for his claim at

the conclusion of the reading, that Jesus himself is the Bread of Life.

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is portrayed as the one who comes down from heaven. He is the one who gives life. This is a remarkable teaching, for Jesus refers to himself as having come down from heaven. Essentially, this is a teaching reflecting the prologue of John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, / and the Word was with God" (1:1, NABRE) and "the Word became flesh" (1:14, NABRE). No other gospel makes such a claim. Johannine theology is Christology. The true bread from heaven that gives eternal life is none other than Jesus himself, the Word of God made flesh.

Living the Paschal Mystery

In the midst of such rich theological and christological statements that we find in the gospel reading today, what are we to do? The response that Jesus demands of us in this gospel is what was demanded of those who heard the discourse: Believe in the one whom the Father has sent. That, of course, is Jesus. We are called to recognize and believe that God the Father sent him into the world. Once we believe that, our lives will never be the same.

In this story we have no ethical demands, no commandments, no imperatives other than "believe." It's as though once we do accept and believe this fundamental reality, the morals and ethics will naturally flow from that. So we reflect on the mystery of the incarnation, the coming down from heaven to live among us, the bread of everlasting life. How are our lives different because of this belief?



Focusing the Gospel

John 6:24-35

Jesus is speaking to two groups here: those who witnessed the miracle of the loaves (last Sunday's gospel) and those who did not see the miracle but have heard about it and want to see a similar sign. To the first group, Jesus tells them that there is something much deeper in this event than "food that perishes" being multiplied; the real "food" is the word of God proclaimed, its power and authority manifested in the miracles of the loaves.

To those who seek a sign as the Israelites sought a sign from Moses, Jesus reminds them that it was not Moses himself but God who provided their "grumbling" exodus ancestors with bread in the desert (recalled in today's first reading from Exodus). In Jesus, the Bread of Life, God gives his people true bread, which leads to everlasting life.

Focusing the First Reading

Exod 16:2-4, 12-15

As noted above, today's first reading is the story of God's "raining down" manna in the desert for the starving Israelites as they begin their wilderness journey to the land promised them by God. Manna (in Hebrew the word means "what is it?") was actually the sweet-tasting honeydew secreted by insects that fed on the sap of tamarisk trees. In the dry desert air each morning, most of the moisture of the secreted substance would evaporate, leaving sticky droplets on the ground and plants that the Israelites would collect each morning. In this way the Israelites saw that God provided "bread from heaven" for them during their sojourn in the wilderness.

Focusing the Responsorial Psalm

Ps 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54 (24b)

Psalm 78 is unique among the psalms in that it is more a teaching narrative than a song of praise. The psalm is a retelling of the story of the exodus, God's leading the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in their own country; the psalm memorializes for future generations the history of God's leading their ancestors and establishing the nation that is now their homeland. The verses selected for today's responsorial recount God's sustaining the Israelites with manna in the desert.

Focusing the Second Reading

Eph 4:17, 20-24

Today's reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians has a clear baptism. Former "Gentile" ways of life and attitudes must be put aside "put on the new self" that is the justice and peace of God in the ris

PROMPTS FOR HOMILISTS, CATECHISTS, AND RCIA TEAMS

Have you ever placed your trust in what you thought was "imperishable," but in the end proved to be very "perishable"?

What difference does the Eucharist make in your life that could not be fulfilled by other forms of prayer?

What forms of "manna" have "rained down" in your life?

In what real ways do we "become" the Body and Blood of Christ for others?

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 5, 2018

Gospel (cont.)

John 6:24-35; L113B

So Jesus said to them,
 "Amen, amen, I say to you,
 it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven;
 my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.
 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven
 and gives life to the world."

So they said to him,
 "Sir, give us this bread always."
 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."