

Bread for the Life of the World

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

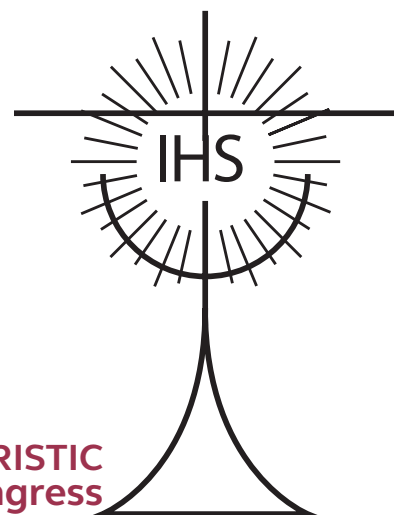
5 August 2018

Readings Summary

Reading 1	Exod 16:2-4, 12-15	<i>I will rain down bread for you from heaven.</i>
Psalm	Ps 77: 3-4, 23- 25. 54 r.24	<i>The Lord gave them bread from heaven.</i>
Reading 2	Eph 4:17, 20-24	<i>Put on the new self that has been created in God's way.</i>
Gospel Acclamation	John 14:6	<i>I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord; no one can come to the Father except through me.</i>
	Matt 4:4	<i>Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.</i>
Gospel	John 6:24-35	<i>He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.</i>

Readings & Homily Notes

- As is often the case in the Lectionary today's Gospel does not follow on directly from last week's. Omitted are verses 16–23. At the end of last week Jesus has 'escaped back to the hills by himself'; today's Gospel begins with the crowd catching up with Jesus and the disciples on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In between the disciples set off across the Sea and near the middle a wind arises. The terrified disciples see Jesus walking towards them on the water. He calms their fear by proclaiming 'It is I. Do not be afraid.' Before the revelation of Jesus as 'I am the bread of life' at the end of today's Gospel he first reveals himself to his disciples. John's text is full of Old Testament allusions: the whole passage can be read as a gloss on Psalm 106 (107): 23–30 where God leads them 'to the haven they desired'. John also echoes Old Testament theophanies where the initial encounter provokes fear and terror but is met words of reassurance. This is the context in which the disciples will hear Jesus' preaching on the Bread of Life and will eventually lead to Peter's proclamation of faith at the end of the chapter.
- Another omitted verse towards the end of the chapter makes clear that 'he taught this doctrine at Capernaum, in the synagogue' (John 6:59 following the Gospel on 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time).
- Jesus' first answer to the people suggests that they cannot read the 'signs' but are pursuing Jesus because he provides them with food.
- He then introduces the idea of 'work' and it is a dialogue between Jesus and the people. 'Work for food that endures to eternal life' ... How to do 'the works that God wants' ... 'working for God... believe in the one he has sent' ... 'What sign... What work will you do?'



- The Catechism defines the liturgy as ‘the participation of the People of God in “the work of God”’ (CCC 1069). It then goes on to note that ‘In the New Testament the word “liturgy” refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity.’ (CCC 1070).
- Food is used as a metaphor in the Old Testament for God’s wisdom and word. On the 20th Sunday in the First reading from Proverbs Wisdom says ‘Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared’.
- As with last week’s readings there is a close correlation between the first reading and the Gospel. Whereas last week there were parallel narratives, here Moses in the wilderness and the provision of manna is referred to in the Gospel.
- The people are looking for a sign, a sign that Jesus is the new Moses. They claim that ‘he gave them bread from heaven’.
- In the passage from Exodus the Lord says that by being fed ‘you will learn that I, the Lord, am your God’. At the end of the reading Moses reminds them that it is the Lord who has given them bread to eat. (This is an occasion in the Lectionary where the end of the first reading is explicitly referred to in the psalm response).
 - [The First Reading is also an example of the small errors in the Lectionary: the *first* book of Exodus.]
- The psalm has strong Eucharistic themes:
 - Remembering — *anamnesis*
 - Thanksgiving — *eucharist*
 - Feeding
 - The foretaste of heaven and the desire to be brought home at last.
- In John Chapter 6 some scholars suggest that Jesus’ discourse on the Bread of Life follows the model of Jewish preaching where a scripture text is elaborated. Here John 6:31 ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’ which is a quotation of Exodus 16:15 (i.e. the end of the first reading) is explored through to verse 58.
- Throughout the whole of Chapter 6 (and John’s Gospel as a whole) there is an emphasis on Jesus’ relationship with his Father. He reminds the people, as Moses had done, that it is his Father who gave them bread not Moses.
- To Jesus’s saying that the Father gives the bread from heaven which gives life to the world the people respond ‘give us that bread always’. There is an strong connection with the woman at the well in John 4 who, when Jesus offers her the water of eternal life, responds ‘give me some of that water’ (John 4: 15).
- At the conclusion of the Gospel reading Jesus moves beyond speaking of ‘my’ Father who has set his seal on him, to saying ‘I am the bread of life’ and revealing himself. This is the first of seven titles that Jesus reveals of himself in John’s Gospel. Jesus the bread of life offers sustenance for all believers and the promise of eternal life.
- The Second Reading from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, though not directly connected with the other texts, does have the line ‘unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus’. One of the themes of John 6 is the people’s inability to hear properly and to recognise Jesus as the truth.

Homiletic Directory

CCC 1333-1336: Eucharistic signs of bread and wine

CCC 1691-1696: life in Christ

Liturgical Material

Penitential Act

Lord Jesus, you give us the food that endures to eternal life.

Lord Jesus, you call us to goodness and holiness.

Lord Jesus, you show us the way to the Father.

Intercessions

For all refugees in exile from their homeland;
may they encounter welcome and hospitality from all whom they meet.

For all who are seeking faith;
may their hunger and thirst for God
be fulfilled in the knowledge and love of Jesus.

Bulletin material

What does the word liturgy mean?

The word 'liturgy' originally meant a 'public work' or a 'service in the name of/on behalf of the people.' In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in 'the work of God.' Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.

In the New Testament the word 'liturgy' refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity. In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbour. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one '*leitourgos*'; she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity).

Invitation to Personal Prayer & Reflection

The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

The things we have heard and understood,
the things our fathers have told us,
we will tell to the next generation:
the glories of the Lord and his might.

He commanded the clouds above
and opened the gates of heaven.
He rained down manna for their food,
and gave them bread from heaven.

Mere men ate the bread of angels.
He sent them abundance of food.
He brought them to his holy land,
to the mountain which his right hand had won.

Psalm 77 (78): 3–4, 223–25, 54. R̄ v. 24
Responsorial Psalm, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A number of psalms look back over the history of the Exodus and other Old Testament events. By putting these stories into poetry helped people to remember. The poetic version is not a simple retelling of the event but also a reflection upon it and its significance. Memory and remembrance are central to the celebration of Mass. We hear and remember the good things that God has done and give thanks; we recall passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and are fed by his Body and Blood. The responsorial psalm begins by speaking of memory and tradition — we remember what we have been told and, like Paul describing the Eucharist to the Corinthians, this we pass on. The manna is the ‘bread from heaven’, the ‘bread of angels’ and in the Eucharist we are offered a foretaste of heaven, ‘a pledge of future glory’.

Contemporary neuroscience sees memory as layered. When we remember a past event we do not recall the original but our most recent memory of it. This offers a profound way of approaching the Eucharist. *Anamnesis*, the term used for describing the act of remembering and making present at the heart of the Mass, with this image gathers not only the original event but also the succession of celebrations since then. Rather than seeing this as a series of steadily fading images it can be seen as time collapsing and time present and past (and future) are one.

- What are those things you have heard and understood which you treasure?
- What do you want to tell the next generation?

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