

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time by Father Dave

– Isn't it great how God always provides for His people? I mean – since the time of Adam and Eve, even though they sinned God continued to take care of them, to the present day – God is always present for His people. He may not always give us what we ask for, but He will give us what we need. We recall how he fed the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land with manna and quail in the desert.

But it was a treasure they did not understand or recognize. They needed Moses to explain it to them. However, they had been given an even greater treasure which they also failed to recognize – the treasure of their freedom. God had liberated them from their enslavement in Egypt. And now, at the first hurdle, they begin complaining and yearning for the well-fed days of their slavery. At that moment, their God-given freedom was an unopened treasure, an unappreciated gift, which they had not yet discovered. They would gladly have exchanged their freedom for a loaf of bread.

In last week's Gospel selection, we read about how Jesus fed the 5,000 people with plenty of food left over. (God always provides more than we will ever need). Those gathered around Jesus ask Him to give them food that endures for eternal life. What He offers them is the very gift of Himself, the very Bread of Life – Eternal Life. The words proclaimed in Sacred Scripture can become food for eternal life for those who respond in faith. In our hunger for meaning and direction, let us always be attentive to the saving word of God.

Jesus identifies Himself as the Bread of Life – the answer to every need. He is the One Who fulfills every necessity, every day, for He is food that endures for eternal life.

We have much in common with both the Israelites who wandered in the desert, and with the crowds who were fed by Jesus and later sought Him out, looking for more. Whether we live in a bustling city, in a suburb, or in the remotest rural area, we face deserts in our own lives – difficult times when we seem to be lost or facing impossible challenges.

These readings speak to our lives today. Jesus continues to invite us to recognize the treasures which God in His love is offering, but which we so often overlook or fail to appreciate. When we look at the situation of our own lives, or of our Church and world, perhaps our initial reaction is to do what the Israelites did: we moan and grumble about the situation. God's response is always to send us His blessings and His love, just as He showered down bread in answer to the Israelites' hunger. The challenge for us is to listen to the voice of those who, like Moses, call us to recognize the goodness of God, the freedom He brings us, the Promised Land to which He is leading us. Jesus makes the same appeal to us as He made to the crowd: "Believe in Me." Look beyond the surface

and respond to the invitation God is making. We cannot fully appreciate a rose without holding it by the stem and feeling the thorns. (We can look at it from a distance without holding the stem, but then, we would not fully know the rose). Similarly, if we had sunshine every day without rain, we would become a barren desert without life. We, like the Israelites, are called to take the good with the not so welcome events of our lives, balancing them, and never forgetting the goodness of the Lord – the treasure that is given to us each and every day but sometimes we take for granted and overlook. And let us always be thankful for the Eucharist – the Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity that Jesus gives to us for our journey.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace.

Saints for the week – **St John Vianney, August 4** - Born near Lyons, France in 1786 and before the French Revolution. After shepherding cattle on his family farm, he decided to study for the priesthood. Instead, he was drafted into the army, but deserted in 1809. When amnesty was granted by Emperor Napoleon in March 1810, he returned to France. He entered the seminary, and despite his poor record at studies, he was ordained on August 12, 1815. He was assigned as a parish priest in 1817 to Ars-en-Dombes – a remote, sleepy town of 230 people. It seems his bishop placed him where not too much would be expected of him. Little did the bishop realize the miracles of grace that would occur there. One of the miracles was the number of people who experienced the Sacrament of Reconciliation because of St John Vianney. On some days as many as 300 people would visit, causing him to be in the confessional many times for up to 12 hours in the winter and sixteen hours in the summer. The other miracle was the establishment of LaProvidence – a shelter for orphans and deserted children. St John Vianney is the patron saint of Parish Priests.

Dedication of St Mary Major, August 5 – In the year 431, after the Council of Ephesus (which confirmed the original Nicene Creed, condemned several heresies), Pope Sixus III built a basilica in Rome. St Mary Major is the oldest church in Western Christendom dedicated in honor of Mary, the Mother of God.

The Transfiguration of Jesus, August 6 – The Divinity of Jesus was made manifest to Sts. Peter, James and John when Jesus appeared before them on Mount Tabor and His face and clothing shone radiantly. His appearance before the apostles was a confirmation to them of His relation to the Church and His role as the Son of God. A feast in honor of the Transfiguration has been celebrated in the Christian churches of the east since the 5th century. In the Middle Ages, as interest grew in the Holy Land and the various sites connected with the life of Jesus, this feast was established in the Western Roman Empire.

*18th Sunday in Ordinary Time –
Seminarian Craig*

The Bread of Life

In our first reading from the Book of Exodus, we once more hear of the Israelite community distressed with Moses and Aaron. No longer being in Egypt where they had fleshpots and their fill of bread, they are in the desert where they must supply their every day needs for themselves. Where is their faith in the God Who brought the plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt? Where is their faith in The One Who freed them from bondage, and saw them safely through the Red Sea? Even with the fact that they once more are doubting God, God does not abandon them. He rains down bread from heaven in the morning and meat in the form of quail at night. This gift of food from God is not just for one day but for the whole forty years they are wandering in the desert. This food that came down from heaven is a foreshadowing of the Holy Eucharist. In our Gospel reading we see Jesus once more surrounded by a crowd. Jesus knows that they are not looking for Him because they believe in Him, but because He fed them once before and they want more. Jesus teaches them and us that earthly food, though it may sustain our life here on earth, it does nothing for our spiritual life, our supernatural life. Jesus is the only One who can give us this food, this food that not only satisfies our spiritual hunger but gives us everlasting life.

We all work very hard for the things of this world-for our homes, our cars, our vacations- but these are all temporary, they are not everlasting. How much effort do we put into the things that are not temporary, those that are everlasting?

We worry about the items that will make us successful in the eyes of the world. In the end we cannot take the items, success, or fame with us. Jesus is telling us in our Gospel to not work for those things which perish, but for that which is everlasting and that is eternal life. What is it that we should seek? What is it that will be everlasting, that will give us eternal life? We must have bread, but it must be the bread of life. How do we receive this bread, where does it come from? Just as the manna came down from heaven so too does our Bread of Life come down from heaven, at every Mass. The Holy Eucharist is truly our Bread of Life, for it is truly the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord. Jesus is our Bread of Life; it is He for Whom that we should work for and put all our efforts to receive Him. Just as the manna that the Israelite community received in the desert sustained them, the Holy Eucharist that we receive when we attend Mass sustains us. Let us not miss one chance, one opportunity to receive this great gift of life given to us freely by our Lord and Savior, this manna come down from heaven.

