

Eighteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

† Sunday, 1 August 2021



Cycle of Prayer: Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights

Keynote: The Bread of God gives life

Book of Exodus 16: 2-4, 12-15

The People of Israel grumbled and protested at the hardships they had to endure in the wilderness ask, *'Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our hearts' content?'* Maybe the Lord God is testing the people, testing their loyalty, their faith, in order to reveal to them God's power and generosity. *'I have heard,'* God says, *'the complaints of the sons of Israel, so between the two evenings you shall eat meat and in the morning you shall have bread to your heart's content.'* And so we are told *'quails flew up in the evening and covered the camp; in the morning there was a coating of dew all round the camp... and there on the surface of the desert was a thing delicate and powdery, as fine as hoarfrost on the ground... not knowing what it was they asked "What is that?"* And Moses said to them, *'That is the bread the Lord gives you to eat.'* There is a clear link here between faith, loyalty to God, and the sustenance that God will give each day to those who belong to the community of faith.

Responsorial Psalm 77 (78): 3-4, 23-25, 34 – God's patience and the people's ingratitude for all that God gives

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 4: 17, 20-24

The apostle, in this section of his letter, gives a series of moral exhortations to the Christian community. Christians who in baptism have put on a new nature must lead lives that reflect their new relationship with God and with each other in the communion of faith. *'I want to urge you,'* he says *'in the name of the Lord not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live... that is hardly the way you learnt from Christ... you must give up your old way of life, you must put aside your old self... your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self.'*

Gospel according to John 6: 24-35

Having witnessed the feeding of the multitude – last week's gospel passage – the people *'got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to search for Jesus.'* The evangelist John is almost inviting us to look for Jesus too and thus to discover for ourselves the bread of life. Jesus speaks to the people saying *'I tell you, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat.'*

So what are we looking for, what is our community of faith seeking in coming to listen to the words of Jesus? Referring to the Old Testament 'manna' – the bread that God gave the people to eat in the wilderness, Jesus says *'It is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread... the bread of God... (which) gives life to the world.'* And where can we find this bread we ask? *'I am the bread of life,'* says Jesus. *'He who comes to me will never be hungry, he who believes in me will never thirst.'* Now we can reflect on the fact that Jesus leads us into the deeper mystery of God's saving grace. Now it is time for our hunger for life's meaning, our thirst for the spiritual, to be nourished by faith.

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Note – Feast of the Transfiguration on Friday, 6 August 2021