

- There's a great irony in our Gospel today.
- After feeding the 5000 and more as we read in our Gospel of last week with just a few loaves a fish, the doubter still ask Him today: *"What sign do you do so that we may believe?"*
- Jesus affirms that they had seen signs enough for belief when He says to them: *"...you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."*
- They had filled their bellies...given no thought to the indication of much greater things, recalling the old saying: *"For those who believe, no evidence is necessary; for those who refuse to believe, no evidence will be sufficient."*
-
- They were similar to the Israelites in the desert in our first reading—forgetting God's providence toward them just a few weeks before in freeing them from slavery in Egypt, and after witnessing the 10 plagues, the fiery column, and even the parting of the Red Sea and the miraculous destruction of the Egyptian army to save them.
- Yet they still doubt God's love and care...fearing He will not be able to provide for their needs in the desert.
-
- Now isn't that so much like ourselves? No matter the bounty and blessings that are laid in our hands, we tend to focus on the immediate...and doubt God's love for us.
- Especially odd in this nation...in which food is so plentiful...where every variety of food we want from all over the world is down the street.
- Slabs of fresh fish already caught and prepared. A hundred feet or more of meats and cheeses—something not even dreamed about in past ages.

- An acre of breads, fruits and fresh deli...and on and on...
- And yet...sometimes I still find myself whining that they don't have my caffeine-free diet Pepsi in re-sealable bottles! Oh...can I endure the hardship?!!
-
- We have plentiful housing, clothing, medicine...the necessities of the body in superabundance...some of the best schools in the nation for our children...a beautiful church for our worship...incomparable weather and beautiful landscapes.
- And still we will wonder if God loves us...if He can provide. Still... we in our weak humanity will focus upon that one or two negatives in our lives...worries which can destroy our peace, our trust and our faith in God.
- Those little negatives are like those nefarious bark beetles—as tiny as they are, if not checked, they multiply, burrow in and fell even the mightiest tree of the forest by their constant assault.
-
- Certainly the blessings we have are not necessarily in proportion to our level of holiness or favor with God. As Jesus tells us, it rains upon both the just and the unjust...and as we see in the saints, very often the holiest among us are the poorest and the most suffering.
- But we do witness daily the bounty that God can provide.
- Just try to think of which people on earth has had to struggle less than we do for the necessities of life.
- This isn't to diminish those who DO have real struggles in life—hunger, alcoholism, marital problems, disease, errant children, the death of loved ones, etc....but the vast majority of us live better than Roman emperors or great European kings and popes of the past.

- In times past there was ever-present war, disease, banditry, famine and plagues in every place...and I think we forget that when we complain...like those Israelites in the desert forgot the whips, chains and beatings of their slavery once they were free of them.
-
- And yet... all that God gives us is for naught unless it somehow direct us toward eternity—life with God.
- As Jesus tells us: “...*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” (Matt 6:21 RSV)
- Without focus upon God and eternity, we are the foolish lotto winner who blows everything he’s won and ends up living under a bridge.
-
- ...and thus Jesus’ admonition today: “*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.*”
- Why did God give us so much here? Because we are so holy? Remember what God tells Moses in the first reading: “*I will now rain down bread from heaven...thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not*” ...to see if they follow my Word.
- Labor for eternal food—the food of grace and blessedness which lasts forever.
- And how do we do that? By being “mirrors of God”...reflecting that love of Christ to those around us...by seeking to be—as Jesus exhorts us to be—perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect... through love and obedience to God, charity and forgiveness.
- A rather tall order...but attainable—not on our own, but through the grace that Christ provides...especially through the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

- Yet the holiness to which we are called does not come without effort; it does not simply fall into our laps. But God has given us ample grace in Christ to attain holiness.
-
- Jesus tells us today: *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”*
- We hunger and we thirst for that which is essential to us...and Jesus assures us today that He is the fulfillment of all that, and more...not for simply a day, a year, or even a lifetime...but for all eternity.
-
- In this chapter 6 of John, we will hear Jesus explicitly tells us in the next few weeks of the essential and irreplaceable nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- But the Eucharist itself is given to enable us to grow to an ever-greater holiness.
- And yet...we can consume even this holiest of foods—the Body and Blood of Christ—and still have no increase in holiness if we refuse to cooperate with the grace it provides...
- ...for to “consume” Christ is not simply to stroll to the altar and receive communion in the Eucharist, but to drink in the very words, thoughts, and desires of Jesus—of God Himself...and to conform our life to Him. That is what it means to be “in union” with Him.
- For He is the true and eternal food—the true and eternal sustenance and nourishment—come down from Heaven...in order to draw us upward to our true home...and to eternal life.

Reading 1

[Ex 16:2-4, 12-15](#)

The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites said to them,

“Would that we had died at the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt,

as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread!

But you had to lead us into this desert
to make the whole community die of famine!”

Then the LORD said to Moses,

“I will now rain down bread from heaven for you.

Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion;
thus will I test them,

to see whether they follow my instructions or not.

“I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites.

Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh,

and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread,

so that you may know that I, the LORD, am your God.”

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp.

In the morning a dew lay all about the camp,

and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert
were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground.

On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, “What is this?”
for they did not know what it was.

But Moses told them,

“This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54](#)

R. (24b) **The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

What we have heard and know,

and what our fathers have declared to us,

We will declare to the generation to come

the glorious deeds of the LORD and his strength

and the wonders that he wrought.

R. **The Lord gave them bread from heaven.**

He commanded the skies above

and opened the doors of heaven;
he rained manna upon them for food
and gave them heavenly bread.

R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

Man ate the bread of angels,
food he sent them in abundance.
And he brought them to his holy land,
to the mountains his right hand had won.

R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

Reading II

[Eph 4:17, 20-24](#)

Brothers and sisters:

I declare and testify in the Lord

that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,

in the futility of their minds;

that is not how you learned Christ,

assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him,

as truth is in Jesus,

that you should put away the old self of your former way of life,

corrupted through deceitful desires,

and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

and put on the new self,

created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

Gospel

[Jn 6:24-35](#)

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.”

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.”