

Reflection for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” John 6:51

Today in our Gospel reading we hear of a continuation of the conversation that Jesus is having with the crowd about that fact that he is “*the Bread of Life.*” Our reading this Sunday shows a change taking place in the crowd as they interact with Jesus in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. This year our readings on the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 21st Sundays of Ordinary Time, all have a Gospel reading taken from the Gospel of John chapter 6. It is in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John that we hear of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walking on water, and Jesus stating that he is the bread of life. It is in chapter 6 that we find the author of this Gospel providing us with an opportunity to reflect on why Jesus came into the world, one like us in all things but sin.

We do see a marked change in how the crowd reacts to Jesus at the start of chapter 6 as compared to how the crowd reacts to Jesus at the end of chapter 6. At the start of the chapter the crowd just cannot get enough of Jesus, they follow him from one side of the lake to the other. At the end of the chapter, we hear that many of His disciples are struggling to such an extent with His teaching on the Eucharist that they return to their former way of life. At this point Jesus turns to the 12 Apostles and asks them if they will also leave Him, at this point Simon Peter states “*Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*”

Taking up our crosses and following Jesus is not only hard because of the way of life we are called to embrace which is so different from the world, but also it is hard due to what we are called to believe. Today and throughout chapter 6 of the Gospel of John we are invited to embrace Jesus as the bread of life and to understand Christ as present in the Eucharist. This is not the only concept that followers of Jesus find challenging. In the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 1 verse 23 we hear St. Paul state “*we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.*”

The living and true Triune God that we as followers of Jesus Christ have chosen to follow is all knowing and all powerful and is beyond time, but our loving and compassionate God has chosen to connect with us by sending the Son, into the world. Jesus Christ, in His 33 years here in this world healed the sick, brought the dead back to life, preached the good news to the poor, instituted the seven Sacraments, founded the Church on Peter, died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and rose on the third day for the salvation of all humanity.

Our, all powerful God does not invite us to embrace His power with triumph and authority of a King, but rather He invites us to humbly take up our cross and follow in His footsteps as a servant. This invitation from our God is very different from the values of the world and by the standards of our world makes little to no sense. Our God is inviting us to be meek and humble not strong and powerful. What we value as followers of God is so very different from what the world values. It is no wonder in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John that the author relates that many of Jesus’ disciples found His teaching too much and returned to their former way of life. Today with the pandemic, challenges in society, Chapter 11 reorganization of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, and for some Pope Francis’ Motu Proprio “*Traditions Custodes,*” we might feel like Jesus’ disciples in chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. But may we not lose heart or lose our way may we respond as Simon Peter did “*Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*”

In closing yes, our Lord does have the words to eternal life, and He provides us with Sacred Scriptures that strengthens us in our journey of faith. Christ also provides us with the Eucharist which He instituted at the Last Supper. May we look back on our own lives and the 2,000-year history of the Church and see that yes, our Lord has a wonderful plan for each one of us, and in these challenging times may we trust in Him and the Church that He founded on St. Peter, the rock.