

My Dear People of God,

Today we celebrate the Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time and also continue our journey through the '**Bread of Life Discourse**' that began last Sunday. This Sunday continues the theme of Jesus the Bread of Life. The readings again show God's loving care of us His people by feeding. However, this Sunday the deeper meaning of the feeding begins to unfold. The food that gives real life is not just bread from the earth, but rather bread from heaven. We hear this message both in the first reading and in the gospel. The gospel reading in a special way, tells us that Jesus is the true bread from heaven.

Last Sunday we had the account of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish out of the generosity of the boy. Jesus from the generosity of the boy fed the people with ordinary food (bread and fish) and He did so with great generosity. Afterwards, Jesus and His disciples cross the lake and the people followed them in hope of receiving even more food. But this time Jesus refused to give it to them, rather He invites them to dig deeper into what they truly desire.

Jesus made it clear to them that He had not come down from heaven merely to satisfy people's physical hunger. Rather He came to give them heavenly bread that they would eat and never become hungry. He said to them: *"Do not work for food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, food that the Son of Man will give you."* Jesus challenged them to face the deeper hunger they have, a hunger for God. A hunger which when satisfied, satisfies all other hungers.

My dear brothers and sisters, true satisfaction only comes from God. We can go to the stores and come back with trolleys loaded with food, drink and all manner of stuff and yet not be satisfied. One can have an abundance of food, drink and stuff and yet have no peace, no restful sleep or fulfilment in life. There is more to life than food, drink and stuff! Only God can give us this food that truly satisfies and He has done it in giving us His only Son Jesus. Only God can satisfy our deepest hungers.

In the first reading we have an account of an episode of the Exodus journey. The account of the murmuring in the wilderness highlights more than the Israelites' discouragement in the face of hunger. Their very real need for food put their faith in God to the test and they grumbled to Moses and Aaron. Given their vulnerable situation in the wilderness, a certain amount of complaining is understandable. However, the extent of their complaint is unacceptable; they prefer their former situation of slavery and oppression in Egypt with food to their freedom without food! To them, freedom with a commitment to the liberating God, is a small price to pay for the satisfaction of the meat (fleshpots) and bread of Egypt. One would think and expect that the amazing character of the Exodus events would have prompted the people to develop a faith and confidence in God that would be unshakable amid the obstacles they were now facing.

In the final analysis, it was not manna that sustained the Israelites in the desert but rather, it was God. They should have therefore placed their faith and trust in Him. In the same vein, Jesus invites the crowds not to seek Him because of the bread that he provided, but rather for the true

bread that gives life- which is Jesus Christ Himself. He is of course, preparing them for the Eucharist! 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."

As we continue on our journey of faith let us embrace in a real and committed way, Jesus the bread of life that He may satisfy us, so that we may never be hungry or thirsty again.

Thanks and God bless

*Fr Simon Peter*