

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 19, 2018
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Reflection

In today's Gospel, Jesus says "This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." The people of Israel to whom he was speaking - they knew what he was talking about. They remembered when their forefathers left captivity in Egypt and made their slow way to the promised land. They wandered in the wilderness for forty years; a time necessary to be purified by trial, to learn dependence on God, to grow in trust and to offer thanksgiving. Feeling hunger, they didn't ask God for food with trusting reverent prayer. Instead they gave sullen complaint to Moses and Aaron. "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger (Ex 16:3)." A hungry baby doesn't wait patiently for mom, but wails with loud persistence. Does mom get angry? Well if she does it's hard to see. Food is offered with smiles and calm and patience and love. With consistency! because a wail is hard to bare. And the child is satisfied - for a brief time - and grows in trust. So it was with God. "The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." He gave the people manna; enough for the day. Generations passed.

Prov 9:1-6
Ps 34
Eph 5:15-20
Jn 6:51-58

At some point, they began to fall asleep each night certain that tomorrow would bring the same. They grew in trust; they were transformed; they knew themselves as God's people; an identity that survived wealth and poverty; freedom and oppression; diaspora, exile and holocaust. Manna from heaven that fed, the law of Moses that taught, the rod of Aaron that led - these brought them to a land as a people who believed.

But Jesus gives more. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." He is the true food from heaven, saying words of eternal life, breathing out the Spirit who lets us believe. He promises life to come without end, without tears, and without pain. Not just to a small people between the desert and the sea, but to all who receive him in faith. And this life begins now, although it's hard to see. He's present in the Eucharist, body and blood, soul and divinity; but his glory is veiled and hidden in the bread and wine. Our glorious life has already begun, but it's veiled and hidden in this vale of tears. Jesus asks us to trust and believe. "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed." But first, we will hear from Sebastien Grandmaison, a seminarian from our parish studying with the Companions of the Cross.