

HOMILY SUN 19-B
“Jesus – Bread of Life ”
(1 Kg 19:4-8; PS 34; Eph 4:30-5:2; Jn 6:41-51)

One of our Oblate brothers, Louis Andreas, made this comment about some pie he had for dessert: “Lucky they cut it in six pieces; I’m not sure I could have handled eight!”

Put your faith in Jesus, the Bread of Life.

There is a hunger in the world today for something, someone that will truly satisfy. Everyone is longing for more. One man said that he no longer wants to live in his community, because too many people are on pills. Why? What are they missing? What hunger are they trying to satisfy?

Elijah in the first reading was hungering for death - so desolate and down was he, rejected by his people and hunted by the rulers of his time who wanted to kill him. His situation resonates with the situation of many today - people at the end of their ropes, frustrated, lonely and angry, leading lives of quiet desperation.

Just last week a young man aged twenty hung himself in front of his girlfriend’s house in one of the communities in our diocese. Less than a week later, a twelve year old girl from one of our communities, living in Winnipeg, did the same thing. Why? What is happening in our communities that young people feel drawn to end their lives?

Less dramatic but very real nevertheless is the young man who is married, has a family, a job in the health field, attends church and sometimes proclaims the readings, yet feels a longing – a feeling that something is missing in his life. He is wondering if becoming a deacon might fill that hole in his soul. What or who can remedy this human hunger for more?

The gospel today provides a clear answer. Only one person in the history of the world claimed to be the “Bread of Life” and that is Jesus. He is the one who has seen the Father, who will raise us up, who gave the Hebrews in the desert manna to eat, who gives eternal life. We must turn to him, draw close to him, and experience his presence in our lives, and we will have eternal life within us even now, through faith.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks of the ancestors of the Jews, who were attached to Judaism, worship of one God, one Creator. Jesus states clearly that if they really knew the Creator, they would turn to him, accept him, and come to him who is the bread of life come down from heaven. Without knowing it, their hunger was for him. If only they had realized that, but they missed it, because he was too ordinary. If only we could realize that. Is it possible that we miss him today, because he still is too ordinary?

How then can we eat this bread of life? In three very ordinary ways, I would suggest.

One is through God's Word, pondering it, feeding on it. Can you imagine what would happen if every family spent half an hour early in the week reading, sharing and praying with the gospel for the following Sunday, and then trying to live it throughout the week? That could transform a family.

Sharing God's Word transformed our little community of three in Beauval (two Grey Nuns and me) years ago after we took Marriage Encounter. We would gather every Friday night to share scripture, share our feelings and pray for each others needs. Then we would play a game of Uno. The result was almost dramatic: We grew closer to each other and the late Sr. Francoise blossomed, gained confidence and even lost her stutter.

Another is through the Eucharist. This is a miracle - humble bread and wine, through the faith prayer of the community, becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus, his very flesh. The difference from this food, and ordinary food, is that when we receive communion, we are taken up into Christ, and we are transformed, little by little, into him from within.

To be transformed into Christ-likeness through the Eucharist is to live the words of the second reading today from Ephesians: "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. In short, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love." And when we act like God, we get to feel like God – now that is transformation.

One first communion candidate described her experience of receiving the Eucharist this way: "It's like God giving us an 'inside hug'." Only the Spirit, source of all life, can supply the understanding of this spiritual food that is the source of life for all people

A third way to feed on Jesus is to recognize him in each other, not only those close to us, but even in our enemies or those who don't like us. What a challenge! But that is what Jesus meant when he said, "Eat my Body and my Blood." He meant to accept, understand, forgive and love your brothers and sisters, for they are his Body.

Matt Talbot was an Irishman, addicted to alcohol. Before the days of Alcoholics Anonymous, he struggled and failed for years to overcome his addiction to alcohol. Finally he had a conversion experience, quit drinking, and began to go to daily mass for his strength and support. Basically, he replaced his addiction to alcohol with faith in Jesus as the Bread of Life. He spent the rest of his live in humble service of others who were struggling with the same addiction, and today could be considered the patron saint of all people in recovery.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, Jesus is present among us in his Word, in this Eucharist, and in each other. Can we truly believe this, and live it in our lives?

So, have faith in Jesus. Turn to him, the bread of life, and feed on him, through his Word, through communion, and through our love for each other.

HOMILY SUN 19-B PREACHED VERSION

“Jesus – Bread of Life ”

Joke: Bro Louis and pie

HH: Most people lead lives of quiet desperation.

PT: Put your faith in Jesus as the Bread of Life and feed on him.

Spirituality of Incompleteness

Hole in our Soul phenomenon

The Gospel Answer – Jesus the Bread of Life

Role of the Spirit – to help us understand and believe
(Ayiciwewin) or (Sohketeheskaketominihtowin)

Example: Matt Talbot

Eucharist

SO: Put your faith in Jesus as the Bread of Life and feed on him.