

John 6

I AM

the Bread of Life



### Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we celebrate the **18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**, in today's Gospel, Jesus makes an "I am" statement. It initiates his great self-revelation. Jesus says, *"I am the bread of life."* He not only multiplies bread. He is bread.

That is the reason why Jesus fled when they wanted to make him king. It wasn't some kind of false humility. The fact is that Jesus is greater than any king. A king, a political leader, can give people bread - and that is a good thing. A political leader can create a system where people are motivated to produce bread - and that is a better thing. But Jesus offers something much, much greater. Jesus is bread. As he says, *"Whoever comes to me will never hunger."*

To understand the significance of Jesus' self-revelation, we need to look at the context. Jesus is speaking to his Jewish brothers and sisters. Jesus is a son of Israel; he was born into the chosen race, the Jewish people. His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, was a faithful Jewish woman. When the Jewish people heard the word *"bread,"* they immediately thought of the manna, the miraculous bread God gave them during the forty years in the desert. So they said to Jesus, *"our ancestors ate manna in the desert."*

Today, we can also say, *"our ancestors ate manna in the desert."* We have become part of the Jewish people. As St. Paul says, we are *"wild branches"* that have been grafted on to the olive tree. One of my friends (living now in California) has a cherry tree that produces both Bing and Rainier Cherries. He accomplished it by grafting different branches onto a main tree. By our baptism, we have been grafted to the olive tree of Judaism. As Pope Pius XI stated, *"we are spiritual Semites."* We can say, *"our ancestors ate manna in the desert."*

The question before us this Sunday: Who is Jesus? For me - Who is Jesus? Is he some small part of my life - or is he as necessary to me as food and drink?

Today we have learned something about Jesus' identity. He comforts us in our troubles, but he doesn't say he will affirm us no matter what we do. He helps us have a better life, but he doesn't guarantee financial success. He teaches the purpose of life, but he doesn't give secret knowledge to make us superior to others. He is meant to rule our lives and our world, but he does not allow us to use him for personal political ends. What he tells us is this: ***"I am the Bread of Life."*** If we come to him, we will never hunger and thirst for anything else. He is the Bread of Life. That is Jesus' identity.

Have a Blessed Week!

Rev. Rafal Ligenza

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