

***Eighteenth Sunday of the Year – Cycle B
St. Francis of Assisi Parish – Belchertown, Massachusetts
August 5, 2018***



Scripture Readings: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 ✕ Psalm 78 ✕ Ephesians 4:17, 20-24 ✕ John 6:24-35

 One day, a man was walking through a field, deep in meditation and reflection. He stood in awe before a huge oak tree, reflecting on the tiny acorns lying around the base of the tree — the ones that had fallen off in the wind. He looked across the fence at a huge field of pumpkins, each one growing on a tiny vine. Suddenly, he had a thought. He said to himself, “God must have made a mistake! Why should huge pumpkins grow on tiny vines and tiny acorns grow on huge trees? It doesn’t make much sense.”

Just then, there was a small wisp of wind and a tiny acorn fell from the tree and landed on top of the man’s head. He smiled a little, looking at the acorn and then at a pumpkin and said, “Maybe God got it right after all.”

In our Gospel reading today, we hear of people coming to Jesus unsure of what it is that they want from Him. They think they want bread like they received in our Gospel last week. But Jesus tells them that they don’t need physical food from Him. Rather, they need spiritual food; that which will nourish their souls and that, ultimately, it is this spiritual nourishment that matters most. That is the kind of nourishment that will lead to eternal life.

The people then ask for something that is a kind of “pet peeve” of Jesus in His ministry: they seek some sort of sign. They have doubts about who Jesus is and what He can give them. They seek a sign just as Moses sought a sign; just as their ancestors sought signs from God. They questioned God. Their faith was weak.

The man who was questioning why pumpkins grow on tiny vines while acorns grow on huge trees also had a lack of faith in the power and wisdom of God. He needed a sign — an acorn falling on his head instead of a pumpkin — to restore his faith, to help him believe that the wisdom of God is without fault.

Jesus tells the people in today’s Gospel passage that they do not need a sign. He says that *He* is the bread that comes down from heaven; that those who rely on Him, who seek to know Him, will never hunger or thirst, that is, they will always know the love, compassion and generosity of God. No signs or wonders are needed when one has a strong relationship with Jesus, when one allows Jesus to be an active part of every facet of one’s life.

There is a story of a man and his young son who went on a camping trip in the mountains. They hired an experienced guide who brought them into the heart of a great forest and beautiful spots in the mountains that they would never have been able to find themselves.

The guide, who was old and wise, was constantly pointing out beauty and wonders that the mere passer-by would never notice. The young boy was fascinated by the guide’s ability to see so much in the surroundings. At one point the young boy said to the guide, “You see so much. I’ll bet you even see God out there.” The old man smiled and said, “As life goes on, it’s getting hard for me to see anything but God out there.”

All who go to Jesus will never hunger or thirst. A close relationship with Jesus keeps us from needing signs and wonders to prove that God is with us; to prove that God loves us. For people who are close to Jesus, no hardship can shake their faith. For people who are not close to Jesus, no sign or wonder can build their faith. Jesus asks us to stay close to Him and to witness his love in so many ordinary ways. It is there that we see the miracle of God’s love.

May our eyes and our hearts be always open to that love and may our dedication be a sign to all the world of our faith in Christ. ✕