

## Bible Study

### Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle B

**Opening Prayer:** (Sign of the Cross) “Lord our God, you watch over all you have made and you hear the cry of everyone who calls out to you. You know the hunger in our souls, our longing to know you better and to love you more fully. Speak to our souls now and allow us to taste once again the depth of your goodness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

#### **Focusing Questions**

1. What is your favorite food? Is there a particular reason for that?
2. Can you say that God fed you this past week? Explain.

#### **Commentary before the First Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15**

Sometimes God’s patience with us humans is amazing! After all the magnificent miracles that God had worked to rescue his Chosen People from their slavery in Egypt, less than 2 months later they began complaining because they were having a hard time finding sufficient food there in the desert. Instead of punishing the people for their fickle faith, God lovingly provided both meat and bread for them. Notice that both came to the people in remarkable, unfamiliar ways – a deliberate sign that this food was a gift from their God.

Read the First Reading aloud. You might find it helpful to include verses 5-11.

1. Which aspect of their lives in slavery did the people recall when they were hungry? Does this surprise you?
2. Did the Israelites complain directly to God? What does this show about them?
3. Which part of God’s instructions about the food were the “test” referred to in verse 4?
4. The “fifteenth day of the second month” would have been a Sabbath; the people spent their Sabbath complaining against God! After sundown that day (after the Sabbath was over and work could resume) the quail descended on the camp and there was meat to catch, prepare and eat. What does this say about the holiness of the Sabbath Day in God’s eyes?

#### **Commentary before the Second Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24**

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive Sunday that our Second Reading has been taken from Saint Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. The central focus of the letter is the Church – not the local congregation in Ephesus, but the nature of the *universal* Church, which exists because of God’s saving love and whose purpose is to make God’s plan of salvation known throughout the universe. This excerpt speaks of how members of the Church must live differently from the non-believers around them.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. Which sacrament “puts on the new self” and obliges Christians to live in this new way?
2. Saint Paul often speaks of Christian life as something “new,” something different. What does that tell us about the normal lifestyle of non-believers around them?
3. Considering that Saint Paul has written in the previous verses about the focus of Christian life, what might he mean about the Gentiles living “in the futility of their minds”? Verses 18 and 19 help to explain that.
4. Can you connect this reading with the Eucharistic theme of today’s First Reading and the Gospel reading?

#### **Commentary before the Gospel Reading: John 6:24-35**

Because the Gospel according to Saint Mark, which is read during Cycle B, is quite brief, the Church supplements it with readings from the Gospel according to Saint John. Today we begin the so-called Bread of Life Discourse, which in John’s Gospel follows the account of the feeding of the five thousand men and their families. We will continue reading from it for the next 4 Sundays. Not only is it key in our understanding of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, it is also vital that we occasionally reflect upon the day-to-day, practical, continuing grace that Christ available for his disciples through the Eucharist.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Notice which famous incident is skipped (verses 16-23) in order to maintain the thematic focus from last week’s Gospel reading.
2. Which word or phrase in this reading touches you in a special way today?

3. Which words contain Jesus' insistence that faith involves more than just wanting to hang around and be in his company, even if you find great peace there and love what you hear?
4. What is the "work" that we must perform in order to be likewise fed by God? Connect that with "faith."
5. Point out the irony of the statement in verse 30.
6. In verse 32 Jesus challenges the people to believe in him, not as a prophet like Moses who spoke for God, but as more than a prophet. What IS he asking them to begin to consider?

### **Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives**

1. How is the manna in the desert different from the bread from heaven which Jesus promises?
2. Do you feel that you NEED to be fed by the Bread of Life? What brought you to that realization?
3. Besides the spiritual nourishment of the Holy Eucharist, are there specific things on which you consciously rely on God to supply for you? Talk a bit about how that happens?
4. Do you find it hard not to ask God for signs that prove his existence or his love for you?
5. Explain how you experience the last verse of the Gospel in your own life?
6. In what specific ways do you "work" to live a life of faith? Is there some aspect you would like to focus on this week?

### **Closing Prayer – "Anima Christi"**

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within thy wounds hide me.

Suffer me not to be separated from thee.

From the malicious enemy defend me.

In the hour of my death call me

and bid me come unto thee,

that with thy saints I may praise thee

for ever and ever. Amen. (Sign of the Cross)