

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 1, 2021**  
**The food that endures for eternal life” (John 6:27)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last Sunday through miraculous multiplication of loaves narrated in the first reading - 2 Kings 4:42- 44 and the gospel - John 6:1-15, the Lord showed us that he can take care of our needs. Today’s first reading and the gospel took this message of God’s providence to a deeper level. The Lord takes care not only of our bodily needs but also our spiritual needs. As human beings made in the image and likeness of God, we have immortal souls. We do not live on bread alone (Deuteronomy 8:3). We are made for more! This brings us to the theme of today’s homily - The Food that Endures to Eternal Life.

The first reading from Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15, presents the story of how God fed our ancestors in the desert. It was barely a month and two weeks since they left Egypt where they were enslaved for four hundred and thirty years. They departed Egypt in a haste and as such did not have time to bring sufficient food supplies that would last for the duration of their journey. As expected, their food finished, and they were hungry. Rather than look to the Lord for help, they allowed their needs to overwhelm them. This led them to grumble against Moses and Aaron saying, “Would that we have died at the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread” (Exodus 16:2-3 ). They forgot that the Lord who brought them out of slavery, led them across the red sea as on dry ground, defeated the Pharaoh’s army before them could give them food to eat.

The Lord, nevertheless, rained down for them manna and quails, thereby availing them a balanced diet of carbohydrate, vitamins and protein. He gave them this food for forty years as they journeyed in the desert.

Why did he allow them to feel hungry in the first place? It is to teach them that man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord ( Deuteronomy 8:3). There is more to life than food, drink, money and what money can buy. The Lord brought this message

home to the crowd who came to Capernaum looking for him because he gave them bread for the bellies. “You are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill” (John 6:26). Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27). Recall that the audience our Lord was addressing were the beneficiaries of the miracle of multiplication of loaves and fish near Tiberias. While our Lord performed this miracle, he gave a hint that this miraculous bread which quenched their hunger pointed to something beyond ordinary bread. It pointed to the Eucharist.

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life, and this living charity wipes away venial sins. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him:

Since Christ died for us out of love, when we celebrate the memorial of his death at the moment of sacrifice, we ask that love may be granted to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit. We humbly pray that in the strength of this love by which Christ willed to die for us, we, by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, may be able to consider the world as crucified for us, and to be ourselves as crucified to the world. . . . Having received the gift of love, let us die to sin and live for God (CCC 1394).

Dear brothers and sisters, we need food for our belly, but we need more. We need love. We need Eucharist. It is the only sacrament that contains God himself. We need God. He alone satisfies the deepest yearning of our hearts. When the crowd asked our Lord what they can do to do the work of God, he put succinctly, “Believe in the One God sent” (John 6:29). In other words, to believe in him the Incarnate Son of God. Our Lord’s audience asked for further signs such as the manna which our ancestors received in the desert. The Lord clearly stated, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst” (John 6:35). This echoes the word Yahweh spoke to his people during the time of Prophet Isaiah, “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, buy grain and eat;

Come, buy grain without money, wine and milk without cost! (Isaiah 55:3).

Like our ancestors the crowd at Capernaum did not take into account that the One speaking to them transformed water into wine (John 2:1-10), healed the paralytic at Solomon's portico (John 5:5-9), multiplied bread and fish for them in a deserted place (John 6:11), walked on the sea (John 6:19), opened the eyes of the man born blind (John 9:6-7) and raised the dead (John 11:43-44).

The Bible takes us from shadow to reality, from the manna to whom the manna foreshadowed - Christ the Lord. Is it possible that in our own lives that we can fail to notice the presence of God in our lives? Do we allow ourselves to be distracted by the passing things that we fail to fix our gaze on the Lord? When I go to Church is it a mere habit or social function? Do I let my heart to encounter the One who is my life? Do I sometimes settle for watered down Christianity? What is the vision and passion of my life? Do I surrender to secularism? The Lord calls us today not to live like the gentiles, heathens and agnostics but that we may attain the unity of faith and knowledge of God, to mature manhood to the extent of full stature in Christ (Ephesians 4:3). We cannot allow ourselves to be alienated from the life of God because of ignorance and hardness of heart or for any reason whatsoever (4:18). On the contrary, we must fix our gaze on Jesus who gave us himself as the food that carries us into eternal life.