

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

Sunday, August 5, 2018

Readings & Background

This Sunday's Readings

First Reading

Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15

The Lord feeds the Israelites with manna.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 78:3–4, 23–24, 25, 54

A song of praise to God for his deeds to Israel.

Second Reading

Ephesians 4:17, 20–24

Christians become a new creation in Christ.

Gospel Reading

John 6:24–35

Jesus teaches the crowds that he is the “bread of life.”

Background on the Gospel Reading

This Sunday we continue to read from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, but not continuously. Our Lectionary omits John's report of Jesus' walking on water. This event is reported much less dramatically in John's Gospel than in the Synoptic Gospels. After the feeding of the multitudes, the disciples leave in a boat and Jesus follows them. The disciples are said to be terrified by what they see. Jesus reassures them and rejoins them. In today's Gospel, we learn that the crowd has noticed the departure of Jesus and his disciples and so seeks them out in Capernaum. In the dialogue that follows between Jesus and the crowds, Jesus unfolds for us the gift of himself that he gives in the Eucharist.

In today's Gospel, there are four exchanges between Jesus and the crowd. In the first, the crowd, having followed Jesus to Capernaum, asks a very matter of fact question: “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus replies by naming their motivation in pursuing him. They have been fed. Jesus acknowledges this, yet challenges them to see beyond the fulfillment of their material needs. The crowds have followed Jesus because they have been fed. They ought to be seeking out Jesus because he can give them eternal life.

As the second dialogue begins, it seems that the crowd might be on their way to accepting Jesus and his mission. They ask: “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus replies that they must have faith in the one sent from God. But in the third dialogue, the crowd reveals their inability to see Jesus' true identity. They ask Jesus for a sign so that they might know that Jesus is from God. How strange this sounds since Jesus has just fed more than 5000 people. What more is expected?

But the crowd cannot see beyond the surface of the sign. They show this in their interpretation of the sign that came from Moses. In their description, they identify Jesus with Moses, as if to say, as Moses gave the people manna in the desert, give us a sign so that we will know that you are from God. They are looking to identify a prophet without realizing that God is standing before them. Jesus corrects their misinterpretation, saying that the manna received by their ancestors came from God. As God fulfilled their ancestors' needs in the desert, so God has provided them with food for eternal life. In the bread that they have received from Jesus, they have received physical nourishment and also spiritual nourishment. Jesus wants the crowd to see beyond the surface to the One who provides true nourishment.

The conclusion of the dialogue reveals the crowd's blindness. They ask for what Jesus has just told them they have found: “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus answers plainly that he himself is the Bread of Life they seek. Jesus himself is the Bread of Life who will satisfy every hunger and thirst. This is the first of several such statements found in John's Gospel. We understand these better when we remember that God revealed his name to the people of Israel as “I am,” as Yahweh. Jesus is now claiming this name for himself. In the weeks ahead, we will see the offense that this gives to the people.

Grades 1-3

Gospel Reading

[John 6:24–35](#)

Jesus teaches the crowds that he is the “bread of life.”

Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Young children are naturally open to God’s actions in our world. We can help them grow in faith by encouraging their openness to God and inviting them to a spirit of thanks and praise for all that God does for us.

Materials needed

- Four wrapped packages containing the following items:
 - a flower
 - a sweater
 - a loaf of bread
 - a picture of people caring for one another

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Divide the children into four groups and give each group one of the four wrapped packages. Tell them to wait before opening the package. Say: *These packages contain examples of some of the many gifts that we have been given by God. After you have opened the package, see if your group can identify what the gift from God is that this object is an example of.* Give the instruction to open the package and allow time for them to talk about what the object represents.
2. When each group is ready, ask for volunteers to report what their group discussed. Ask them to show the object found in their package and tell what gift from God it is an example of. (The flower is an example of God’s gift of creation; the sweater is an example of God’s gift of clothing; the loaf of bread is an example of the food that God gives us; the picture is an example of the people that God give us to love and care for us.) Say: *God sure has given us a lot to provide for our needs!*
3. Say: *In today’s Gospel, we hear that the people were seeking out Jesus because he had fed them with bread and fish (recall last week’s Gospel). Jesus tells the people that God gives them an even more wonderful gift. Let’s listen carefully to this Gospel.*
4. Read today’s Gospel, John 6:24–35.
5. Ask: *What does Jesus say that he has already given the people?* (He gave them food, loaves of bread and fish, so that they would not be hungry.) *Are the people satisfied, or do they want something more?* (They aren’t satisfied; they want more bread.)
6. Say: *Jesus says that he will give them more bread, but this bread will be an even better gift than the food they have already eaten. The bread that he will give them will permit them to live forever with God in heaven. Jesus says that he will give them the gift of himself, that he is the bread of life. This is the gift that Jesus has given to us in the Eucharist.*
7. Conclude in prayer, thanking God for all the wonderful gifts he has given to us, especially for the gift of the Eucharist. Pray together the [Act of Faith](#), [Act of Hope](#), and [Act of Love](#).

Grades 4-6

Gospel Reading

[John 6:24–35](#)

Jesus teaches the crowds that he is the “bread of life.”

Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Older children are aware that as human beings we have many needs that must be fulfilled if we are to remain healthy and happy. We can help them to see that God provides us with all of these needs and fulfills our greatest need by giving us the gift of eternal life in the Eucharist.

Materials needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Tell the students that there are many needs that must be fulfilled to be healthy and happy. Invite them to name some of these needs. As they are named, invite a volunteer to write them on the board.
2. Observe that some needs are more important than others. Together look at the list that you have prepared and talk about ways in which these needs might be ranked. This will be challenging and should result in an interesting discussion. Allow time and reassure the students when there are disagreements.
3. Say: *We human beings have many important needs that must be fulfilled if we are to be healthy and happy. In today's Gospel, we hear that the people were seeking out Jesus because he had fed them with bread and fish (recall last week's Gospel). Jesus tells the people that God will provide a wonderful gift that will satisfy an even more important need. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.*
4. Read today's Gospel, John 6:24–35.
5. Ask: *What does Jesus say that he has already given the people?* (that he gave them food, loaves of bread and fish, so that they would not be hungry) *Are the people satisfied, or do they want something more?* (They aren't satisfied; they want more bread.)
6. Say: *Jesus says that he will give them more bread, but this bread will be an even better gift than the food they have already eaten. The bread that he will give them will permit them to live forever with God in heaven. Jesus says that he will give them the gift of himself, that he is the bread of life. This is the gift that Jesus has given to us in the Eucharist.*
7. Conclude in prayer, thanking God for all the wonderful gifts he has given to us, especially the gift of the Eucharist. Pray together the [Magnificat](#).

Grades 7-8

Gospel Reading

[John 6:24–35](#)

Jesus teaches the crowds that he is the “bread of life.”

Making the Connection (Grades 7 and 8)

Young adolescents are developing emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. They have learned that physical needs must be met if they are to stay healthy. We can teach them the importance of also attending to their spiritual needs.

Materials needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Tell the young people that there are many needs that people require to be healthy and happy. Invite them to name some of these. As needs are named, invite a volunteer to write them on the board.

2. Observe that some needs are more important than others. Say: *Sometimes we talk about our most important physical needs as our “basic human needs.” Which items on our list might be considered a “basic human need?”* (water, food, shelter, clothing) *There are also non-physical needs that might be considered “basic human needs.”* What might be examples of these needs? (love, a sense of purpose, healthy relationships, faith)
3. Say: *Human beings have many important needs that must be fulfilled if they are to be healthy and happy. In today’s Gospel, we hear that the people were seeking out Jesus because he had fed them abundantly with five loaves of bread and two fish.* (Recall last week’s Gospel.) *Jesus tells the people that God will provide a greater gift that will satisfy their spiritual needs. Let’s listen to this Gospel.*
4. Invite one or more volunteers to read today’s Gospel, John 6:24–35.
5. Ask: *What has Jesus already given the people?* (He gave them food, loaves of bread and fish, so that they would not be hungry.) *Are the people satisfied, or do they want something more?* (They aren’t satisfied; they want more bread.)
6. Say: *Jesus satisfied a basic physical need, but the people wanted more food. But Jesus tells them that he can give them something even more important than food; he can give them eternal life. What is the question the crowd asks next?* (They ask what must they do to accomplish God’s work.) *What does Jesus tell them?* (that they will do what God wants when they believe in him) *Then, Jesus says that he will give them the gift of himself, that he is the bread of life. This is the gift that Jesus has given to us in the Eucharist.*
7. Say: *When we celebrate the Eucharist, we are offering God our thanks because God provides for all of our needs, our basic physical needs and our spiritual needs.*
8. Conclude in prayer, thanking God for all the wonderful gifts he has given to us, especially for the gift of the Eucharist. Pray together the [Act of Faith](#), [Act of Hope](#), and [Act of Love](#).

Family

Gospel Reading

[John 6:24–35](#)

Jesus teaches the crowds that he is the “bread of life.”

Family Connection

In today’s Gospel, the crowd asks Jesus for a sign so that they can believe that he has come from God. This is a curious request, because Jesus has just fed more than 5000 people with just five barley loaves and two fish. How quickly they seem to have forgotten the wonderful thing that Jesus has done for them. Or, maybe they never recognized the miracle in the first place. Sometimes we don’t recognize the wonderful things that God has done for us. And, sometimes, we simply forget and ask for further evidence of his love and care. We pray that God will remove our blindness so that we can receive with thanks and praise all the wonderful things that God accomplishes in our lives.

Together as a family, name the wonderful gifts that God has given you and some of the remarkable deeds that God has accomplished in our world. Observe that it is important to stop to count our blessings because we can easily miss recognizing all of the wonderful things that God does for us. Read together today’s Gospel, John 6:24–35. Ask: Why are the people seeking out Jesus? (because he has fed them) What do they want from Jesus? (a sign that he has come from God) What does Jesus tell them? (He says that he will give them something greater and more important than the bread that fed their physical hungers; he will give them bread that will give them eternal life.) Recall that we have this gift from Jesus in the Eucharist. Pray together, thanking God for all that he has given to us, especially for the gift of eternal life and the Eucharist. Pray together the [Magnificat](#).