

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE;
HE WHO COMES TO ME NEVER BE HUNGRY.
HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER THIRST.”**

After the miraculous multiplication of the loaves, the people went in search of Jesus. He told them that they were looking for perishable food and were missing the true nourishment that God had given them. Like the living water “welling up to eternal life”, Jesus provided food that “endures for eternal life”.. The people didn’t need to work for this food; they only needed to believe in the one God sent to them.

The people demanded a “sign” like the manna that Moses gave them in the desert. Jesus was himself the sign, the true expression of God's providential presence. Jesus is the bread of everlasting life who satisfies the spiritual hunger of the soul. John tells us that he said the things he said “while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum”.

Today we join the hungry crowds who gathered at the Galilean lakeside. We, too, come seeking Jesus, asking him to feed us with the bread of life.

Exodus 16:2-4. 12-15

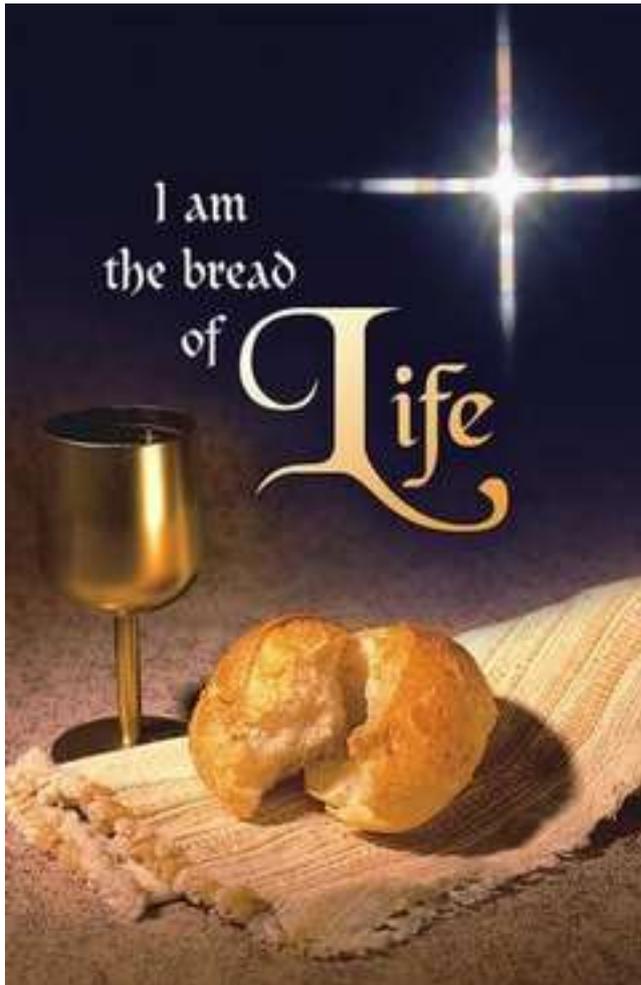
The starving Israelites beg Moses to feed them. The Lord rains down food from heaven.

Ephesians 4:17. 20-24

Many pleasures are illusory. St Paul prescribes a total renewal in the way we think: a return, in other words, to the way God created us to be.

John 6:24-35

People were expecting Jesus to be like Moses, providing them with daily bread. Instead, Jesus offers them fresh, rejuvenating food, unlike any other.



In County Mayo, on west coast of Ireland, there's Croagh Patrick, the holy mountain. It's known locally as 'the Reek'. The last Sunday in July is 'Reek Sunday'; people come from all over Ireland and even beyond, to climb the mountain. As many as 25,000 people climb on this one day alone. Some people do it with intense religious fervour and a lot of prayers. Some people, of course, go about it in a more relaxed manner. A lot of them just go with the crowd; somehow they just want to be part of (as they say) the "day that's in it."

But I suppose everyone does the climb because of some deep unspoken desire to do it; a desire to go higher, a desire to leave the everyday world, to get away from the daily grind; there's some inner desire to reach the heights as well

as to see views that you don't often see, views of the beauty of Clew Bay, and the beauties of the world that lie far and wide, way beyond and below our feet. This experience shows us how lovely the world is, how broad and wide and fresh and exciting. How good it is to be alive and to be making the journey of life. Old people and children will make the climb together, keeping step with each other and showing each other how good it can be, whatever their stage of life.

We need experiences like this to inspire us; we need something to give us courage to persevere in life's journey; to give us an inner resource for all those days when life is humdrum and our hearts are heavy. As we walk the long and lonely road, we "lift up our eyes to the mountains. Where will our help come from? Our help shall come from the Lord who made heaven and earth."

As the Israelites made their way through desert and barren land in search of God's promises, they moaned and groaned at the hardships and harshness of it all. Wouldn't it better to be back in Egypt where they at least had a hot meal and a warm house? Better that than this long, lonesome and never-ending journey. Wasn't that true? No, in fact, it was not true. Egypt was security, yes, - but not

freedom. Who wants to live a life with no prospects? Surely, that's just a living death. Why live when there is nowhere to go? Life is a journey or it's nothing.



But if life gets too hard, why go on? Surely, **then**, it's understandable if we just live for the day – just settle for whatever pleasure comes our way. Some people even drown their sorrows; they take whatever will take the pain of a painful life away. Drink and drugs often **hide** a deep desire for life. You can really **say** - about a lot of people who take to drink, 'You don't drink because you want to die. You drink because you actually want to live.'

In a way the Israelites were like that when they asked for food in the desert: God gave them manna for their daily bread. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Their prayer was answered. In the same way, Jesus in his day fed the crowds with bread. This made the people hungry for more, and they followed

him, eager to see what he would do next.

Jesus tells us to look for the things that endure to eternal life. Look for **true** bread that **really** nourishes your heart and feeds your mind and soul. That's going to demand a spiritual revolution inside you. Stop the selfish impulses inside you. Stop the 'me-culture', the 'I-want-it-now culture'. Stop the 'doing-as-others-do culture'.

Learn a different way of living. Set your heart on Christ Jesus – on God's promise of eternal life to us. **Feed** from this source all your life. The Jewish people said to Our Lord: "Give us that bread always," We should say the same, and say it every day. In reply, the Lord tells us, "You will never be hungry. You will never thirst."



The journey of life **is** hard enough. There's no doubt about that. A lot of people find it's an uphill struggle. The American psychiatrist and theologian, Scott Peck, says: "once you accept that life is hard, it ceases to be a problem". In other words, if we really embrace this hardness of life, if we willingly set out on the journey, prepared to face the challenges and set-backs of each day, then we can help each other along the road.

Doing this means that life is no longer a problem we can't handle. Rather it becomes a great adventure that leads us to the land of promise; in the Gospel today we are given the promise of **food**; food and power for the journey (**Holy Communion**) by the Lord himself.

"Are you looking for food, or are you looking for God?"

"Are you happy with a full stomach or are you starving and thirsting for the bread of life?"

**"HE WHO COMES TO ME NEVER BE HUNGRY.
HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL
NEVER THIRST."**

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

E	L	E	A	S	E	S	E	O	M
L	O	F	O	O	D	O	O	D	A
F	L	I	D	A	E	R	B	D	N
D	A	L	A	N	D	E	O	E	N
O	N	S	I	N	L	O	T	S	E
O	R	M	E	I	N	O	T	E	R
M	E	A	E	S	S	A	S	R	A
O	T	V	B	D	O	E	M	T	B
S	E	A	O	B	O	M	A	L	B
E	I	S	N	G	I	S	E	L	A

BOATS

FOOD

BELIEVE

DESERT

RABBI

ETERNAL

SIGN

MOSES

BREAD

SEAL

MANNA

LIFE

